BELARUSIAN REVIEW



SPRING 2012
Volume 24, No. 1

In this issue

EDITORIALS

Will the Prospective Eurasian Union Become A 'Lite' Version of USSR?

By Aziz Burkhanov

In recent years, Belarus and Kazakhstan are being further involved in the Russia-backed integration project known under labels of the Eurasian Economic Community, the Customs Union, the newly (re)created Common Economic Space and finally the prospective Eurasian Union. Leadership in all three countries considers this integration project as the most promising foreign policy initiative, though many observers and political commentators were less enthusiastic. The Common Economic Space Agreement that went into effect since January 2012 gives Russia up to 30 million people in Belarus and Kazakhstan, while these countries expand their access to Russia's sizeable domestic market of more than 140 million new customers. The agreement also emphasizes the free movement of goods and capital across their common borders. Although leaders of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan claim that this project is based on purely economic grounds, no one would deny its greater political implications for the entire post-Soviet space.

According to some political science and decision making theories, the decisions people make in the future are largely shaped by their past experience and personal backgrounds. This consideration seems to be especially applicable to Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan given the highly personalistic character of the political regimes in all three countries. Further integration is something to be expected given the background of the leaders, who spent most of their lives in the Soviet Union. Certainly, main facilitator of the Common Economic Space and the Eurasian Union is obviously Vladimir Putin's return to power on recent election in Russia. Many observers claim that Putin's personal views on the global politics and international relations are rather of someone coming from the late 19th century or earlier 20th century, when the *Realpolitik* paradigm dominated in the global affairs. In other words, this approach favors dividing the world into certain spheres of exclusive influence of greater powers without allowing other greater powers interfering outside of 'their' sphere of influence. Likewise, this kind of indoctrination affects Putin's vision of the other post-Soviet countries: in his view, they all are considered as belonging to Moscow's sphere of influence, while Russian leadership considers itself as a legitimate 'owner' of this area, speaking in the *Realpolitik* terms. As Putin envisions it, the currently still-hypothetical Eurasian Union will eventually incorporate most of the former Soviet Union countries to become a 'lite' version of the USSR and to restore Moscow's economic and political control across former Soviet countries and thus reinforce Russia's position in the world.

What role is given to Belarus and Kazakhstan in this ambitious project and how do Lukashenka and Nazarbayev perceive it? Perhaps it can be implied, given their mentality and their political backgrounds, that they also consider Moscow's superiority and spread of its influence all over post-Soviet space as something of a natural character. On the other hand, further realization of the Eurasian Union idea would eventually require creation of some supranational structures and giving up certain powers of national governments. It is quite clear that after two decades of independent rule both Lukashenka and Nazarbayev will hardly be willing to give up any of their own powers in favor of Moscow if that will threaten stability of their own rule. In addition to that, as recent 'Milk' and 'Gas' wars between Russia and Belarus have shown, economic alliance might be more volatile than it seems. Therefore, Eurasian Union's perspectives are still yet to be seen.

Aziz Burkhanov is a PhD. candidate at the University of Indiana, U.S.A.

Lukashenka's Grave Miscalculation

By Jan Maksymiuk

The EU's relations with Belarus took its lowest point ever by the end of February 2012, when the EU countries recalled their ambassadors from Minsk in a diplomatic tit-for-tat.

On February 27, at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, the EU's foreign ministers added 21 persons, mainly judges, to the existing list of over 200 Belarusian officials under a visa ban and asset freeze. The list is topped by Belarus's President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

On February 28, Minsk retaliated by effectively expelling the EU ambassador and the Polish ambassador. The same day the EU's foreign ministers decided to pull out all their ambassadors from Minsk as a sign of solidarity with the EU's Maira Mora and Poland's Leszek Szerepka, who were given 24 hours to leave Belarus.

A similar ambassadorial evacuation from Belarus already took place in the past. In 1998, Western countries recalled their envoys from Belarus in a bizarre row over diplomatic residences at the Drazdy elite compound near Minsk. Lukashenka locked out more that 20 Western ambassadors from Drazdy because he wanted to have the residential compound all for himself. In response, the involved EU countries and the United States, which were also joined by some non-EU countries from Central Europe, imposed travel bans on more than 100 Belarusian officials. At that time the conflict was resolved in Lukashenka's favor: the Western ambassadors inconspicuously returned to Belarus in 1999 to take alternate residences outside Drazdy, and the travel ban lists were canceled.

This time the situation with the EU's ambassadorial pullout from Minsk seems to be markedly different, at least for three reasons.

First, Lukashenka's record of violations of human rights in his country has notably expanded since 1998.

Second, Lukashenka's record of maneuvers between the West and Russia to extract political and economic benefits for unfulfilled promises has grown significantly bigger, too.

Third, the EU's policy with regard to Belarus in recent years has been increasingly shaped by Poland and its current minister of foreign affairs, Radoslaw Sikorski, who has strong personal reasons to dislike Lukashenka and seek political revenge on him. It was Radoslaw Sikorski who, together with Germany's foreign minister Guido Westerwelle, met with Lukashenka in Minsk before presidential elections in 2010 and was reportedly assured by him that a moderately democratic ballot would be held in Belarus in exchange for rapprochement with the EU. What initially appeared as a big political success for the EU in Belarus vis-à-vis Russia, subsequently become a humiliating diplomatic failure. It is rather unlikely that Messrs. Sikorski and Westerwelle will take the same bait once again and forgive Lukashenka his political trickery just for another promise.

In other words, this time the Belarusian president seems to have miscalculated gravely if he expected to drive a wedge between Poland and the EU regarding their approaches to Belarus. The EU's policy of engagement with Lukashenka, which still has some influential supporters in Brussels (one of them being EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Stefan Fuele), does not look like a feasible option for the time being. At least, such engagement seems unlikely as long as Lukashenka refuses to release all political prisoners and rehabilitate them, which is the EU's sine qua non for reentering into dialogue with Minsk.

For the first time in Lukashenka's 17 years in power he appears to have lost all levers he had in dealings with the West (let us not forget here about a four-year-old diplomatic standoff between Minsk and Washington).

It is debatable whether more EU sanctions against Lukashenka, including targeted measures against economic entities supporting his regime, will make the autocratic Belarusian leader more eager to espouse the course that will become palatable to Brussels. But it is beyond question that the ball in now in Lukashenka's court, and Brussels should not move away a bit from its current tough stance vis-à-vis Lukashenka if it wants to avoid another humiliating failure in its much-hyped Eastern Neighborhood policy.

Quotes of Quarter

Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt.

"[Lukashenka] has tried to manipulate us in different ways and to influence and threaten us in different ways. Now he tries to do something that he thinks will put pressure on us. We interpret this as weakness and desperation. He is in a very tough situation. He is now burning bridges and this will have negative consequences in the future."

2012 Administrative, Editorial Changes

Over the past two years *Belarusian Review* has undergone some editorial and online changes. A number of capable younger people got involved. A reasonable expectation exists that this rejuvenation process within our magazine will continue, both in Europe and in the United States.

Vital Alisiyonak, who for the past three years has been capably handling the BR's circulation in North America, has agreed to take on the additional responsibility of Publisher.

Walter (Viachka) Stankievich, who was the Publisher for the last ten years, will provide some support during the transition period. He will focus on assisting in the completion of the Matching Funds Project in 2012 (described in this column in the previous issue of BR), that had some positive initial response.

While continuing in his other Belarus related activities, Walter plans to be traveling extensively. He'll provide some of his current affairs knowledge, helping to promote his wife Joanne's memoir: **"Living with a Scent of Danger** -- European Adventures at the Fall of Communism". The book covers the period from 1988 to 2000 while Walter was with RFE/RL, serving as the Director of the Belarus Broadcast Service. Joanne describes the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe during the breakup of the Soviet Union and the first years of Belarus' renewed independence. Joanne's linguistic and cultural trials, some humorous, others potentially dangerous, provide a personal touch to the memoir.

Serge Tryhubovich, who ten years ago volunteered to handle the BR circulation in North America, will continue in the Treasurer's position.

The BR rejuvenation process has been especially notable in Europe, where

George Stankevich continues in his function as Editor-in-chief, aided by

Hanna Vasilevich — as Assistant Editor, and

Kiryl Kaścian — as Web site Editor.

George, Hanna and Kiryl are now essentially responsible for the contents of *Belarusian Review.*

European members of the BR editorial staff have been instrumental in securing contributions from Alaksiej Dajlidaŭ, David Erkomaishvili, Aziz Burkhanov, and professors Zachar Šybieka, and Leonid Smilovitsky - now listed as Contributing Editors.

The BR editorial staff is also maintaining contacts with a number of potential contributors from Belarus — experienced specialists in the fields of history, economy, politology.

In the United States a number of young Belarusians is now acquiring graduate degrees — in the fields of interest to our readers.

We shall invite our contacts in Belarus, as well as our students from across the ocean to join the ranks of BR contributors.

Finally, we cannot omit mentioning the very important effort of our U.S-based copy-editing group. Consisting of native English speakers, they have performed the final ” style-polishing ” of language in many contributed articles .

Some undergraduate and graduate students in Europe should also be encouraged to help in both writing and support tasks.

FEATURES

Concept of this Issue

By Kiryl Kaścian, Hanna Vasilevich

The beginning of 2012 in Belarus was characterized by relative calmness which in the second half of February produced a storm of events, some quite unprecedented.

One may define two most important events that dominated the Belarusian society in the turn from winter to spring. The first one was the outcome of Russia's presidential elections which formalized the more than predictable victory of Vladimir Putin. Here is more important not the formalization of Putin's status but rather his integrationist rhetoric which embodies current Russia's attempts to re-establish itself as a dominant political leader in the post-Soviet space and facilitate post-Soviet political and economic integration. Due to its political and economic connections with Russia, Belarus is thus directly affected by this choice. The predictability of the Russia's elections and rhetorics of Putin's electoral campaign turned us to address the **"eastern dimension"** and focus on the different aspects of the integration on the post-Soviet space.

However, the unprecedented but still quite predictable outbreak of the "diplomatic war" between the official Minsk and the EU resulted in the necessity to address the **"western dimension"** as well. The failed and so far ineffective strategy of the EU concerning Belarus seems to have come up with some brand-new tactics, apparently causing new reactions by the Belarusian authorities. Thus, for the first time the printed issue of *Belarusian Review* appears not with one, but two editorials representing both "eastern" and "western" dimensions described above.

The "eastern" editorial —"Will the Prospective Eurasian Union Become a 'Lite' Version of the USSR?" by **Aziz Burkhanov** deals with the prospects of post-Soviet integration of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, describing, among other things, Putin's personal views on global politics and international relations.

The "western" editorial by **Jan Maksymiuk** —"Lukashenka's Grave Miscalculation" analyzes the latest developments in Belarus-EU relations.

David Erkomaishvili in his article analyzes the role of Belarus in the post-Soviet collective security system.

Two well-known Belarusian political analysts **Alaksandr Łahviniec** and **Pavel Usov** contribute their assessments of Belarus-Russia relations after Vladimir Putin's victory in Russia's presidential elections.

Ilya Kunitski addresses the issue of Russia's economic support for the Belarusian regime.

A Slovenian journalist **Polona Frelih** comments on her country's decision to block the EU's move to include the Belarusian tycoon Jury Čyž in the EU's black-list.

The issue also contains contributions from two renowned professors — Dr. **Zachar Šybieka** and Dr. **Leonid Smilovitsky**.

Professor **Šybieka** questions whether the post-Soviet city of Minsk may be regarded as the real capital of the Belarusian nation.

Professor **Smilovitsky** provides a comprehensive overview of Soviet religious policies in post-WWII Belarus, that largely determined the post-war development of Belarusian society. He also familiarizes our readers with main conclusions of his new book "***Censorship in Postwar Belorussia: 1944-1956***" (Jerusalem, 2012), prepared for print within the research framework of the Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center at the University of Tel-Aviv.

Finally, our readers will get acquainted with recent administrative and editorial changes in preparing and producing the *Belarusian Review*.

They will also read about the award ceremony in Warsaw, where our web-editor **Kiryl Kaścian** was awarded 3rd prize in the citizens' journalism category in the "Belarus in Focus" competition for European journalists writing on Belarusian issues — organised by "Solidarity with Belarus Information Office" in collaboration with Press Club Polska. The prize was received for Mr. Kaścian's editorial ***Assisting a Little-known Nation,*** printed in the Fall 2011 issue of the *Belarusian Review*.

Discussing the Exile Government Issue

By Jan Zaprudnik

On March 1 the Belarus Broadcast Service of RFE/RL held an on-line conference with well-known German diplomat -- Hans-Georg Wieck. A listener posed the following question: " What do you know about the Belarusian Democratic Republic (with BNR being its acronym in Belarusian)?" In responding Mr. Wieck stated that the 1918 BNR was "an independent state", however noting that "this state was soon taken over by the Communists."

Another listener wanted to hear more from the influential foreign diplomat: "You don't think that in order to prevent the destruction of Belarus, the exile BNR Rada should be accorded the status of a temporary government of Belarus, a government-in-exile? Who, in your view, should initiate such a procedure?"

Hans-Georg Wieck lost no time in categorically declaring: "BNR Rada today cannot be recognized as a Government-in-exile by any state." Mr. Wieck's categorical response was apparently predicated by his next statement: "After the anti-constitutional coup of 1996 no one even attempted to form an émigré government–in-exile. It is, however, possible to think about it now, taking into account the latest tension in relations between the European Union and Minsk."

Apparently, Mr. Wieck had inadvertently voiced his (personal or collective) project of setting up an émigré government to be formed from among the new Belar-

usian political emigres? If that is so, then Mr. Wieck is deeply mistaken in thinking that such a government should bypass the historical BNR Rada. The opposite is true – any exile Belarusian government would be better grounded if it were to maintain the historical continuity of the 1918 Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR). The functioning of an exile government needs to be based on an historical foundation. It should be connected with the fates of the earlier patriot-activists, as well as with the precedents of acknowledgement of BNR Rada as an institution, and as the bearer of the idea of an independent Belarusian democratic state.

The diplomatic history of the Belarusian Democratic Republic has been studied only in general outlines, while the facts regarding the de-facto recognition of BNR Rada as an exile government, are well known. The BNR Rada was recognized through cooperation with it of various governments at different times. The Czechoslovak Government had dealt with BNR Rada President Piotra Krecheuski, as did the U.S. governing bodies during the presidency of Mikalai Abramchyk. The current BNR Rada President Ivonka Survilla has met more recently with governmental representatives in the capitals of the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (as well as with those of Canada, where she now resides).

In the early 1990's even the Government of the Republic of Belarus had recognized de-facto the BNR Rada under the presidency of Jazep Sazhych, when the Belarus Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to obtain BNR Rada's historical mandate.

As we are aware, BNR Rada did not take such a premature step, and it continues to function under the presidency of Ivonka Survilla, while accepting current émigrés from Belarus as members into its ranks.

Dr. Jan Zaprudnik, a published historian, is one of the leaders of the Belarusian diaspora in the United States.

Belarus in the Post-Soviet Collective Security System

By David Erkomaishvili

The sudden demise of the Soviet Union presented a problem in terms of security provision for the the newly independent states. For decades, a closely integrated system of security had been constructed in the Union especially influenced by the developments of the Cold War and mostly targeted against the West. However, with the end of the confrontation in 1989 and the subsequent implosion of the Union in 1991 two important aspects of security have changed. Firstly, due to the change in the nature of the geopolitical environment (i.e. the end of the Cold War) the nature of threats was transformed. Secondly, the provision for their own security was suddenly assumed by the post-Soviet republics which at that time barely had functioning national armies. Furthermore, because of the interconnected system of security that had existed in the Soviet Union, its functioning after the Union's breakdown could only be achieved through agreed, tuned and timely cooperation between the system's integral parts which had been located located in several sovereign states. Thus, states like Belarus and the Central Asian states not to mention those in the Caucasus, where by the early 1990s violent conflicts were underway, found themselves dealing with the difficult task of providing for their own security without proper political and military structures in place.

Security or defence?

A security system that would prevent conflicts, indemnify against spill over destabilisation and thus foster economic progress has been a must for the post-Soviet space since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Multilateral efforts were considered to be a priority. The first framework logically suited for such a task was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which by the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994 was comprised of twelve states.[1] The initial CIS security activities were designed to smooth down the negative consequences of the fragmentation of the integrated Soviet structures, first and foremost its massive security complex.[2] The idea of acting in concert in military and defence areas lingered from the failed attempt to transform the Soviet Union into a loose confederation of sovereign states with integrated military, foreign, and economic policies. But due to the bold anti-CIS stance of Ukraine[3] — the second most important state after Russia in any integrated security framework if it was to emerge[4] — specifically with regards to its supranationality in the spheres of security and defence spheres of – – and outbreaks of violent conflicts throughout the post-Soviet space[5] the role of CIS as a feasible security framework was watered-down already by the mid-1990s.

In 1992 the CIS officially launched its security project the Collective Security Treaty (CST) – a framework designed to coordinate military action in case of outward attack. The Treaty was signed in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and with only Russia and Armenia present as original non-Central Asian signatories it set off the predominance of the Central Asian region in the CST consequent activities. Despite the quantitative enlargement by the late 1993-1994 with Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan joining — all with changed regimes domestically — and despite being tasked with very concrete goals,[6] the Treaty remained rather defunct with regards to its direct duty to provide security for its members by stimulating cooperative multilateral commitments.

As an element of the CIS system the CST was entrusted with two essential functions: (a) to ease the problems of maintenance of ex-Soviet military structures separated by the sovereign state borders after 1991 but requiring cooperation to stay in a functioning mode; and (b) to assist in development of national armies by establishing a common security space or setting up preferential conditions for the parties concerned, . It was a reliable way of keeping security high and the costs low by sharing the expenses of its provision with other states.

Nevertheless, the multilateral character of the CST fell victim of the CIS. Ukraine, fearful of Russian domination had never formally ratified the CIS Charter and abstained from multilateral activities in this framework. This undermined the CST plans for integrated security systems such as that of Integrated Air Defence from the outset. Other CST members tended to deal with Russia on a bilateral basis. Such bilateral contracts laid the foundation

for the CST(O) core consisting of Russian-Belarusian and Russian-Armenian[7] joint groups of forces tasked with guarding the borders of Belarus and Armenia.

Belarus' security

Minsk's participation in the post-Soviet system of collective security has been closely associated with its membership in the CSTO. As it is normally the case with any alignment, participation in alliance with other states reflects a specific policy choice. Alignment is a cost-effective option to increase state's security vis-à-vis investing too much finance into constructing its own security. Alternatively, there are neutrality and non-alignment options which are much more costly and in many cases less effective. By entering an alliance with other states, a state effectively cuts costs for its own security provision since strong alliance commitments reduce the necessity of setting up and maintaining vast military forces to secure itself. More compact and highly trained forces will be enough in most of the cases. This has been the case with the NATO system in Europe since the early 1950s. Smaller states could be as effectively secured as the larger ones by participating in the same system. By literally involving the musketeers claim of 'all for one and one for all' security alliances tend to be a more popular option in terms of defence than neutrality or even non-alignment.

A brief look at history suggests that the territory of modern Belarus which is located on the European Plain and is a vast mountain-free land has been used as an invasion route to Russia from the territory of Europe several times. Such a geopolitical location makes Belarus valuable to any large-scale military confrontation between Russia and the West. From this perspective neutrality does not offer much advantage since in case of a confrontation Minsk could be coersed by more powerful parties to take sides in the conflict. Although hard to imagine, but any destabilisation in the area of the modern EU and any attack from Europe to Russia will inevitably involve Belarus either in terms of its territory or the air space. Hence, the alignment seems to be a preferable option in terms of security.

And so arises the primary issue of Belarusian security today — the EU area has been one of the most politically and security-stable regions of the world for the last two decades. The question logically follows of whether Minsk has a choice to make and must necessarily align itself to any of the sides? At present Belarus under Alexander Lukashenka does not aim for any integration with the EU, not to mention NATO. Although having higher chances of joining the EU, if it were interested, than both Georgia and Ukraine, it is also exposed to the incomparably higher pressure from Russia which considers Belarus as firmly within its geopolitical sphere of influence. For Moscow the strategy of securing itself by surrounding itself with so-called buffer zones aroud — states which are friendly and allied to Russia — has been the survival strategy for several centuries. The Russian Empire's expansion and the Soviet Union's domination of Central and Eastern Europe as well as post-Soviet Russia's major security policies in the post-Soviet space, have been all to some extent utilising buffer zones as the key sources for providing security. This is one of the reasons why Moscow has been so keen on developing various post-Soviet integration initiatives since the early 1990s.

The next question to ask is why Belarus need secure itself by alignment and what security threats it is facing today? Located in a relatively safe region vis-à-vis conventional security threats and bordering the EU on one side and Russia on the other Belarus is not exposed to a security threats — like terrorist activities, drug trafficking, militant Islamists incursions — on a scale comparable to those of its CSTO partners in Central Asia or even Russia. Traditional threats like aggression of one state against another are less common nowadays. This is especially true for a state bordering the EU which is hardly threatening to Belarus from a security perspective. Thus, the reason for Minsk's participation in the CSTO should be found in a different field.

Belarus' allies

It is important to define what type of alignment characterises Minsk's participation in the CSTO. Stephen Walt has defined two primary types of alignments — balancing and bandwagoning. In his famous balance of threat theory he assumed that the states form alliances because of the threats to their security. When a state resists a threat it forms or joins a balancing alliance. When a state submits to a threat it joins a bandwagoning alliance with the source of the threat. However, if threat as the main source of alignment is omitted, then a well-developed general framework is revealed. Applying this approach to the post-Soviet space it is possible to reason that bandwagoning states are those that depend on Russia in many areas. Belarus, heavily dependent on Russia for energy resources, economic well-being and security, is in a bandwagoning security relationship with Moscow.

What makes little sense is why Belarus would participate in a security alliance with Tajikistan, for example? Both states are located in drastically different regions and exposed to different security threats. This creates very different security objectives to achieve which sometimes could be incomparable or even mutually exclusive. Thus, assuming that Tajikistan is more prone to violent conflict including that based on ethnic origin, state overthrow, or Taliban incursion from the territory of Afghanistan, it is important to ask whether Belarus is committed to defend its formal ally — Dushanbe — from these type of threats should the need arise, bearing in mind that Belarus has signed up to participate in the CSTO's Rapid Response Force tasked first and foremost with focusing on Central Asian security.

The other side of this issue is whether Minsk has reliable allies in Central Asia. Assuming that Belarus would need support in case of a crisis, it is questionable that this support would come from any of the Central Asian members of the CSTO. Thus, it seems clear that Minsk is participating in this alliance to increase its security (or rather the regime's security) by bandwagoning with Russia and less so with the Central Asian states. In fact, under the banner of the multilateral collective security system is hidden the fragmented core of the CSTO members with Belarus and Tajiskistan — formally members — allied through Russia. In this sense Russian-Belarusian, Russian-Armenian, and Russian-Central Asian alignments under the auspicies of the CSTO have very different aims and natures.

Having unrelated foreign and security policy imperatives all members of the CSTO have little in

common participating in the alliance. Even the most widely accepted concept of terrorism as a threat to security is questionable. Not all the CSTO members face terrorism as a direct threat to their statehood. It is Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan that are directly challenged by those forces. Tajikistan has a problem of a different origin. Since the end of its civil war it has rather aimed at balancing radicals and moderates within the domestic political environment. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have never faced a large-scale terrorist threat comparable to that of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Belarus and Armenia have never faced a terrorist challenge comparable to that of the Central Asian one, though instances of terrorist attacks in Minsk are of questionable origins.

What follows?

By bandwagoning with Russia, Minsk has joined the CSTO alliance and now has extended its commitments to the Central Asian states which are outside of its sphere of interests. A possible solution in the mid-term perspective should include bilateralisation of relations with Russia in terms of security provision. However, when it comes to the long-term perspective it should be decided by Belarus itself whether it should use its unique geopolitical location to side only with Russia. Neutrality could be more beneficial in the circumstances discussed above but will be more costly. Nevertheless, it may provide inclreased sovereignty especially in the absence of significant security threats. A proactive role in the European direction will help to stabilise the balance of Belarus' foreign and security policies which are currently too much dependent on Russia. By engaging more in European affairs and trying to increase its role using its geopolitical location, Minsk may provide itself with a more powerful position on the European continent.

David Erkomaishvili is a doctoral candidate at Metropolitan University Prague/Institute of International Relations. His main areas of expertise include alliances, alliance theory, geopolitics, post-Soviet space.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel SCHWARZENBERG Interviewed by Magazine SPIEGEL

SPIEGEL: In your opinion, how far does Central Europe reach? Which countries should still be part of the European Union?

Schwarzenberg: Central Europe has no clear borders. It passes straight through Germany. Düsseldorf and Cologne are part of Western Europe, while Munich and Dresden are already in Central Europe. It's a good thing that Croatia will soon join the EU. Ukraine should also be a member. I believe that the entire western Balkans should be part of the EU, at least if we want to avoid sitting on a powder keg. And Turkey, if it still wants to be -- provided it undergoes some important reforms.

SPIEGEL: So the EU still has a strong appeal for neighboring countries?

Schwarzenberg: Its light is flickering at the moment.

SPIEGEL: Is Europe using its influence appropriately to bring about change in Russia, with its authoritarian government, and in Belarus, a dictatorship?

Schwarzenberg: Europe has become very introverted. It looks beyond the edge of the plate, if you will, but not beyond the edge of the table. Europe has lost something of its global perspective.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release
February 28, 2012

STATEMENT BY MARK TONER, ACTING SPOKESPERSON

Government of Belarus Request that European Union Head of Delegation and Polish Ambassador Return to Capitals

The United States notes with deep regret the Government of Belarus' decision to request that the EU Head of Delegation and Polish Ambassador to Belarus return to their capitals for consultations, while simultaneously recalling its Permanent Representative in Brussels and Ambassador in Warsaw. These actions, like theå expulsion of the U.S. Ambassador to Belarus in 2008 and the closure of the OSCE Office in Minsk in March 2011, are only deepening Belarus' self-isolation. The United States takes note of High Representative Catherine Ashton's statement today, which announced that ambassadors of all the EU Member States in Minsk will be withdrawn for consultations to their capitals, in an expression of solidarity and unity. The United States stands with our partners and joins them in calling on Belarus to end its repression of civil society and the democratic opposition.

HISTORICAL DATES

February 1, 1661

Inhabitants of the city of **Mahileu** rose against the Muscovite occupying army. Assisted by troops of the Grand Duchy of Litva, they liberated their city for the duration of the 1654 war.

February 2, 1838

Birthdate of **Kastuś Kalinouski,** leader of the anti-Russian national uprising of 1863-1864.

March 21, 1840

Birthdate of **Francishak Bahushevich,** poet, lawyer and pioneer of the Belarusian national revival.

March 22, 1864

Kastuś Kalinouski, the leader of the anti-Russian uprising was executed by Russian czarist authorities, in Vilnia.

March 25, 1918

Belarus' Independence Day (Day of Freedom) — Belarusian Democratic Republic (BNR) was declared an independent state by the Executive Council of the First All-Belarusian Congress, in Miensk.

April 4, 1557

450th anniversary of birth of Leu Sapieha, a renowned statesman, chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Litva, compiler and one of the authors of Litva's collection of laws - the Lithuanian Statute (first printed in 1588 - in Belarusian).

ECONOMY

Lukashenka's "Tough Response" To EU Sanctions

On February 20, while taking credentials from ambassadors of nine countries, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenka urged European countries to build relations with Belarus on equal terms. The head of state noted that Belarus could, if necessary, "respond in a very tough manner to sanctions," introduced by a number of European countries.

"We've been tolerant so far to the sanctions that you, Europeans, are waving in front of our noses. But if you cross a red line, we will respond very harshly," BelTA quoted the head of state.

The President drew attention to the fact that during his presidency, there was not "a single complaint" on the part of Europe in the matter of transport, freight movement and its safety on the territory of Belarus.

"I do not understand what else do the Europeans need? Do you need an unstable Belarus? Certainly not. You do not like Lukashenka and his policy? Well, we will not retreat from that while I'm still an elected president. If people vote for such a president, it means they support his policy. I have just one priority – to be committed to my people, stressed Alexander Lukashenka.

Lukashenka: desire to make Belarus bow will lead nowhere

The Belarusian leader stressed that even if Belarus is not supported by its main strategic partners, such as Russia and China, in this regard, the government will defend the current position.

"If someone in Europe is still planning to make Belarus bow by some kind of sanctions, accusations, demands, it's a road to nowhere. Believe me, we stand to die here, like it used to be in 1941-1945, defending our independence and sovereignty," said President of Belarus.

The president said it's neither "some bravura attitude," nor personal ambitions of the country's leadership, but a desire to be like the rest of Europe — "freedom-loving, independent and accountable before its people." Alexander Lukashenka stressed that Belarus "is not creating problems neither for neighbors nor countries abroad," and expects the same attitude.

"I just demand from the Europeans: look closely at our country, and do not play dirty tricks on Belarus. We do not deserve it," said the head of state.

Lukashenka: we do not want to be a thorn in Europeans' flesh

At the same time, Alexander Lukashenka said he did not consider it necessary "to torpedo relations with Europe" under the present circumstances. According to him, Belarus is sufficiently co-operating with Russia, China, India, Central Asia; therefore, the attempt to "take us by hand, hurt or punish Belarus are futile."

"We will provide a normal life for our people. But we do not want to be a thorn in Europeans' flesh, because we are located in Europe's center," said Alexander Lukashenka.

Source: Telegraf.by agency, February26, 2012

Is Nuclear Power the Panacea For Belarusian Energy Problems?

By David Marples

On February 23, Belarus' Minister of Energy, Alyaksandr Azyarets announced the signing of the basic contract for the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power station in Astravets district (Hrodna region). Earlier that month, Belarus' Belvneshnekonombank and Russia's Vneshekonombank signed a bilateral agreement that provides the country with a $10 billion Russian loan payable over 25 years to cover 90 percent of the costs of building the station (telegraf.by, February 23). The contract is the latest development in the protracted project, the goal of which is to ease Belarus' dependence on energy imports, and particularly gas and oil from Russia. The project, however, remains deeply controversial and there are conflicting accounts concerning its viability and potential energy savings

From the perspective of the Belarusian government, Astravets will be a significant asset. On February 17, Belarusian president Alyaksandr Lukashenka met his First Deputy Prime Minister Uladzimir Syamashka, who reported on progress at the site. He informed the president of the signing of a design project agreement with Atomstroyeksport, a branch organ of Rosatom, Russia's federal nuclear energy agency. Earthworks are to be finished by mid-2013 with foundation concrete to be poured by September next year. Syamashka had earlier met with Sergey Kiriyenko, the CEO of Rosatom, and received confirmation that the costs of building the Atsravets station would not be higher than those of the station under construction in Kaliningrad region. Two reactors are to be built with a total capacity of 2,400 megawatts, with a timetable for operation of 2017 and 2018, respectively (Naviny.by, February 19). Information provided by Deputy Chief Engineer of the plant's construction directorate, Uladzimir Horin, states that the initial workers at Astravets will be engineers from current Russian and Ukrainian nuclear power plants, and Belarusian university students will get basic training at operating Russian reactors (tvr.by, February 22).

In a policy brief, Mykhaylo Salnykov of the Belarusian Economic Research Center discusses the economic rationale for the Astravets plant. He writes that when it is fully operational, it "could provide for the entire baseload demand of electricity in Belarus." The new station will also reduce the portion of natural gas in the heat and power generating sector from 91 percent to around 50 percent. Salnykov acknowledges there are some potential drawbacks, not least that the nuclear fuel is likely to come from Russia. He thinks nonetheless that by

the time the station comes on line, Belarusian relations with the West will have improved and thus there could be alternative sources for importing uranium (BEROC, Oct 2011). Conceivably, however, the uranium could also come from Kazakhstan, the world's largest producer and an economic partner of Belarus.

alnykov also raises perhaps the most critical factors relating to the Astravets project, namely its environmental impact and the population's fear of nuclear power, one of the legacies of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Linked to these issues is an unusual spate of reactor building in the region that will have a significant impact not only on Belarus, but also, and particularly, on its neighbor Lithuania. Both Astravets and the Kaliningrad plant are located within 60 kilometers of Vilnius, and the former will use for its main water supply the Neris River, the same source used by the Lithuanian capital. Lithuania, moreover, is building its own nuclear plant at Visaginas as a replacement for its Ignalina station, based on Russian-made RBMK-1500 reactors, which closed at the end of 2009. Decommissioning of Ignalina will not be completed until 2030. GE Hitachi is responsible for the building of Visaginas, unit one of which (1350 MW) is anticipated to be in operation by 2020 and will export electricity to Poland, Latvia and Estonia, as well catering to domestic needs. The site is adjacent to that of Ignalina, close to the border with Belarus and Latvia (world-nuclear.org, Dec 2011).

The Lithuanian plant is an EU-backed project. Kaliningrad and Astravets are Russian projects, part of a new expansion of the industry that also encompasses two new reactors at the Sosnovyi Bor plant near St. Petersburg, Russia's original RBMK station, which has also prolonged the life of its older RBMKs that predated those at Chernobyl. The implications are clear. The Belarusian station forms part of a complex of new reactors in northwest Europe that will change fundamentally the energy structure of the region. Opponents of Astravets therefore raise a logical question: would it not be more expedient for Belarus to purchase its electricity from Kaliningrad or Visaginas than to dig itself into further financial problems by having Russia construct reactors on its territory? Is it wise to remain so dependent on Russia?

That question has not escaped Lukashenka, who has made a series of seemingly off-the-cuff remarks about engaging new partners. On February 20, he accepted the credentials of the new Japanese ambassador to Belarus, Tikahito Harada, and invited Japan to construct a nuclear plant in Belarus, adding that the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi station in March 2011 should not be an impediment to the cooperation of the two countries in the sphere of nuclear energy. "You must build us a beautiful, good, nuclear power station," he added, noting that the Japanese had significant expertise in the area. Lukashenka commented that after Chernobyl, the Japanese had been among the first to come to the aid of Belarus, now the time had come for a return of favors. Fukushima should not deter the two sides from pursuing the exploitation of the "peaceful atom" (Belarus.regnum.ru, Feb 20).

Lukashenka has already invited the Chinese to take part in the building of a new nuclear power plant in Minsk. Earlier China's Guangdong Nuclear Power Corporation had advanced a proposal to build the plant now scheduled at Astravets before the contract was given to the Russian company. The two countries have also agreed to build a "Nuclear Industrial Park," using 80 square kilometers of land close to Smalyavichy, a village located about 35 miles from Minsk, for the sale of household goods, biomedical equipment, and electronics (world-nuclear.org, February 2012; enformable.com, Feb 20; Belarusian Telegraph Agency, Dec 8). Where would the "Minsk plant" be located? Logic would suggest the site of the aborted nuclear power and heating station, located between Minsk and its international airport, abandoned after the Chernobyl disaster.

The Belarusian authorities seem to have adopted nuclear power as the ready solution to the country's energy problems, but it seems a path fraught with perils: financial, environmental, and potential safety problems. In the wake of the Japanese disaster, when some states, led by Germany, seem to have abandoned nuclear energy, the Belarusian leadership has embraced it as a panacea, but without any of the prerequisites that should accompany such projects: expertise, environmental safety, fuel, finances, and popular support

Source: : Eurasia Daily Monitor,March 5, 2012

Outsourced to Belarus

By Elena Gapova

The region's Slavic republics are becoming increasingly important outsourcing destinations for Western tech companies.

On February 8, a company named EPAM Systems began trading on the New York Stock Exchange. In honor of the occasion, its co-founder/CEO/president Arkadiy Dobkin and members of his management team rang the NYSE opening bell. A company going public is rarely big news, but EPAM, which styles itself as a leading global software engineering and IT consulting firm, is situated in Minsk, Belarus. Its appearance on the stock exchange is evidence of an important technological shift: the growth of the former Soviet nations, especially Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, as outsourcing destinations for Western high-tech companies. Giants like IBM, Microsoft, and many others are already on board.

The reason for the contemporary rise of high-tech outsourcing is clear: pay difference between the US and almost everywhere else has created a whole new interest in the world beyond American borders. The initial argument for outsourcing was straightforward and powerful: if an Indian, Chinese, Russian, or Ukrainian programmer is paid one tenth of an American salary, software companies will save money. In the 1990s, post-Soviet software engineers would sometimes agree to work for $500 a month.

Much less obvious, though, is the story of the post-Soviet region shaping itself into an important source of software development. The beginnings are to be found

in the Cold War. During that time, defense departments on both sides of the Atlantic invested huge resources into applied sciences and fundamental scientific research and development, justifying their expenditures by invoking the threat of a looming, antagonistic superpower. In the Soviet Union, the western outposts of Belarus and Ukraine, as well as European Russia, were particularly densely saturated with high-tech industry. In 1990, the USSR boasted over one million researchers, more than any other nation except the United States, and the military-industrial complex financed up to 75 percent of them.

During perestroika, Mikhail Gorbachev made a famous attempt to demilitarize the economy. In his 1988 UN appearance, he announced unilateral cuts in Soviet military spending and the beginning of the program of conversion, i.e. reshaping military technologies for civilian use, and changing the ratio of military/civilian production within the military-industrial complex from 60/40 to 40/60 within five years. That provoked the dismantling of some world-class R&D units all over the nation, as labs lost government funding. At the time, transnational corporations began developing an interest in the region. The story was "finalized" after 1991, when hundreds of thousands of skilled professionals momentarily became available for the global labor market, having lost their jobs in a military that no longer existed.

If initially, the main regional lure for Western employers was the low cost of skilled labor, with time, the post-Soviet region began to be singled out among outsourcing destinations for yet another reason. A white paper produced by the Information Technologies and Telecommunications Committee of The American Chamber of Commerce in Russia in the late 1990s, highlighted the unique workforce qualities that socialism had produced: "Russia's major advantage over other common offshore software development locales is the technical skills and education of its workforce," it said. "Many of these engineers have solid experience and accomplishments in advanced nuclear, space, military, energy and communications projects." The white paper recognized that "many Russian software programmers are self-taught, partially explaining their reputation as hackers who can think outside the box." Thus the myth of the "Russian hacker," capable of breaking into the most secure digital environments, was born.

Source: http://postsovietpost.stanford.edu/, February 28, 2012

Quotes of Quarter

In response to Ljubljana's move, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski told reporters in Brussels,

"This is a sad day for the European Union. It showed that the economic interests of one state turned out to be more important than the need to influence President Lukashenka's power to release political prisoners,"

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski tweeted:

"[I] hope guests [at] the Kempinski [Hotel in] Minsk will spare a thought for the Belarus[ian] political prisoners who rot in jail so that they are comfortable."

BELARUS' FORUM

Belarusians Actually Have no Capital

By Zachar Šybieka

As a historian, I consider the most important attribute of a city ***to be its historical center****. Speaking about Miensk *, it, unfortunately has no such historical center today — preserved, unspoiled, undemolished, free of any transportation burden , pedestrian...*

Some time ago , Miensk's historical center was demolished by the Bolsheviks, who partitioned it with highway arteries, leaving today's Victors' Prospekt on one side, and the river Niamiha and Maksim Bahdanovič Street on the other. As a result the city's historical center has been cut up into two pieces: the Lower City — the city's birthplace, now the 8th of May Square, and the Upper City — Western European and renaissance by nature; they are now separated from each other. There is no unity. Our historical center has been transformed into a traffic yard. And now, despite all our efforts to renew it, it is practically impossible to succeed without first solving the transportation problem. In other cities the transportation arteries either bypass the center, or the city builders have provided an underground passage under the historical center. We have nothing like it. On the contrary: parking lots are now being built in the center , attracting even more cars into it.



There is one more — for me very important — attribute: the city, especially the capital, should represent the nation's culture and history. Does Miensk represent ours? No — it represents the history of the Soviet Union, and looks like a miniature Moscow. It copies Moscow every step of the way. This actually means that we do not have our own capital. One doesn't hear Belarusian spoken here; our cultural traditions are not preserved, our history is not respected. Streets and squares are not named after our national figures and heroes, but rather after prominent figures of Soviet or Russian history. This is why we don't actually have a capital. Our capital is a miniature Moscow. Therefore, despite all our efforts, Miensk has the appearance of a provincial city.

We don't have a capital for another reason: our people are missing a sense of capital consciousness, the pride of inhabiting the capital, the center of a European country. They keep considering other cities more important, more attractive than Miensk. The capital's inhabitants don't strive to return to their own history, to preserve historical and architectural monuments. They are now being ruined — replaced by skyscrapers , which is absolutely inadmissible — and everyone is silent.... That means, that no one is especially touched by it. Neither honor nor pain is being felt for making our capital a genuinely European city, for making it a real national capital of the Belarusian people.

Frankly, this indifference of the capital's inhabitants disturbs me very much. Why is this happening? Possibly, because we don't have many real natives of Miensk. The majority of inhabitants came from the countryside, or from Russia. And they do not feel the pain for Miensk.

First of all: people simply don't know the history of their city. Secondly: there is no tradition of civic activity. The Bolsheviks did everything they could to stifle the civic initiative. And, unfortunately, the current leadership) is keeping those traditions alive: it is afraid toconsult with the people, listen to advice, or organize civic dialogue. The result is that our city, and Belarusian cities in general — not only Miensk! — have all the features of Soviet cities, and none of European cities. Yet our roots are in Europe, in the Western tradition! No matter how strong are the tendencies to russify us , to approximate, or even to "squeeze" Russian traditions into us, the memory of our past, about our having been Europeans and Licvins, remains — and that's indestructible. Our leadership cannot understand it - and the result is discord, division into "us" and "them," oppositionists and supporters of authority. Nobody needs this kind of confrontation. I am always advocating for dialogue among representatives of various parties, supporters of eastern and western orientation. However, our authorities are, unfortunately, not yet prepared for this type of thinking.

When regarded from an architectural view point, we have no precise, strict strategy for modernizing the city. New construction is taking place in a spontaneous way, without being thought out — simply not for people's benefit. Construction keeps getting more dense, creating spatial chaos and a lack of harmony. We are building cities not for people, but rather for cars. Automobiles come first. Everything yields to them. House yards are getting smaller, and it is hard to understand : where should children play? Where are benches for older people to relax in peace? The city is being transformed into a heap of concrete mountains, piled up without any logic or harmony... This depresses the people. One feels psychologically stifled in these concrete labyrinths. If we had at least a normal city center, one could occasionally visit it for a rest. This kind of center would preserve the spirit of the Middle Ages, where everything was organized for people's benefit, not like today. For some reason we tend to adopt from the West the worst, without respecting our own traditions. Many contemporary architectural projects, planned for Miensk, have absolutely with no connection to our history and traditions. A hotel named "Peking" will be built in correspondance with the Chinese architectural style, and another, named "Oman," — in the Arab style. Realization of these projects will result in real eclectic confusion; and all this is due to the absence of a national core.

Will Father Frost* Move Due To Expansion Of Bielavieža Forest Reserve?

In less than three months the presidential decree No. 59 "On some issues of developing protected natural areas" will come into effect. In accordance with this decree the pride of Belarus — the National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča," will undergo huge changes. In particular, the area of the Forest's historical reserve zone will almost double. Preparing the decree took two years.

Presidential Decree No. 59 is a historic event

As emphasized by the Center for Biological Resources at the Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, the presidential decree is merely a technical document, adopted for implementing the "State program of developing a system of specially protected natural areas for 2008-2014."



Nevertheless, some experts consider this document historic for Belarus. It will almost double the size of the reserve of the National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča" . Now its area covers a large part of the primeval forest within its historical boundaries. As many as three generations of civic activists and environmentalists have been waiting for this moment.

"This is a historic event! If one looks at the Forest in the context of its history, its shape has not changed since its establishment in 1991. Yet, if one looks at what's inside the park, one should admit that the decree has brought tremendous changes. Until 2004, the reserve measured 15,500 ha; then it was expanded to 30,000 ha, and now the current decree almost doubles its area — up to 57,000 ha!" — comments **Heorhi Kazulka**, environmentalist and the former deputy director of the National Park "Bielaviežskaja Pušča."

One should recall that the entire area of the Forest is almost 153,000 ha. Prior to the implementation of the decree only 30,000 ha (or just 19% of the National Park area) enjoyed reserve status.

The state reserve ”Bielaviežskaja Pušča” was established in 1939. Its status as a special reserve did not last long. The war broke out, and only after its end did the reserve renew its activities. It retained its status until 1957 when it was reorganized as a hunting reserve, Thus, the presidential decree No. 59 in fact restores the status of a historical reserve.

What should be done with Father Frost's estate?

Meanwhile the recreational use of the forest, hunting and other kinds of nature management will be severely limited, and economic activities now conducted in still ”unprotected” areas will be relocated to the periphery of the National Park.

At the same time it is obvious that the income from forest economic activities will be reduced. This is why the National Park hopes for an increase in state subsidies, integration of tourism into the park's viability plan, and actually, gaining income from it. Heorhi Kazulka sees the development of tourism in the National Park as a positive feature. In his opinion, however, it should be administered by professionals and on a scientific basis.

”First of all, such objects of tourist mass entertainment in the Forest's center, like Father Frost's residence, should be removed from it and transferred to its outskirts. The center should be dominated by the reserve status, management and science. They should form the basis for developing eco-tourism, says Kazulka. ”I saw something like it in Germany, in the Bavarian Forest (*Bayerischer Wald*). Development of the tourism infrastructure also implies the arrival of private business that will develop roadside services ; yet this has nothing to do with the reserve management. ”

”The Council of Europe 's Diploma should be returned”

After implementation of these positive changes the Council of Europe's Diploma should be returned to the Bielavieža Forest, stresses Heorhi Kazulka. Let us recall that in 1997 the Bielavieža Forest received this Diploma for its successes in the field of environmental protection. However, by 2002 the Council of Europe had made many critical observations concerning the National Park's environmental protection activities.

”What previously took place is even difficult to describe. From the moment Mikalaj Bambiza assumed the post of the National Park's director, the park's administration conducted for many years not only the lawful, but also the illegal clearing of the old-growth live growing stock and giant trees for timber. The administration has cleared emergency scientific experimental plots used for forest monitoring, introduced mass implantation of artificial forest, and used heavy equipment and environment-damaging technologies. It also organized the dismissal of most of the National Park's personnel,” says Heorhi Kazulka.

During his recent visit the Council of Europe's expert **Eckhard Kuijken**, who had also visited the Forest in 2006, noted some ”tremendous positive changes.” ”We see that now its work predominantly focused on the environmental component, whereas five years ago economics dominated the National Park's activities,” — stated Kuijken.

Last September the Bielavieža Forest was again visited by long-expected Council of Europe experts, whose evaluation is important for the decision to return the European Diploma to the National Park. The experts were satisfied with what they saw. However, no promises were given — only recommendations to wait until February 2012 when their final verdict is expected.

According to **Vasil Arnolbik**, the National Park's Director of Forest Science, the final decision concerning the Forest has not yet been adopted. In his words, the Bellrus' Foreign Afairs Ministry should inform the National Park about its character. February has passed, yet the decision is still unknown...

** Father Frost is the Belarusian equivalent of Santa Claus.*

Source: www.tut.by.

BELARUS ABROAD

Award For *Belarusian Review* in the International Competition ”Belarus in Focus”

The winners of ”Belarus in Focus,” a competition for international journalists writing about Belarus, were awarded prizes at a press conference, which took place on February 21 in Warsaw. Competition winners also took part in a joint workshop with Belarusian journalists to discuss the conditions of working as a journalist in Belarus.

The competition ”Belarus in Focus,” is coordinated by the ”Solidarity with Belarus Information Office,” based in Warsaw, in cooperation with Press Club Polska, and supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers. There are two categories of entrants to the Competition: professional journalists (people whose articles are regularly published in return for payment) and citizen journalists (those who publish on a source open to public). The judging panel consisted of four persons: Oliver Money-Kyrle, International Federation of Journalists, Anthony Howson, BBC, Andrej Dynko, *Nasha Niva* (Belarus), Yuliya Slutskaya, Solidarity with Belarus Information Office.

Journalists from around the world took part in the competition whose articles concerned Belarus following the 2010 presidential elections. “With the competition, we wanted to encourage the interest of journalists writing for international media on Belarusian issues and draw the international community's attention to ongoing problems in Belarus”, says Yuliya Slutskaya, director of Solidarity with Belarus Information Office.

Winners of the ”Belarus in Focus” journalism competition are:

Professionals:

1. Sam Knight (UK): Inside the Snow Globe (Harper's magazine)
2. Shaun Walker (UK): Theatre's act of defiance in Europe's last dictatorship (The Independent)
3. Polona Freilih (Slovenia): Like Fish in an Aquarium that can Sense the Sea (Delo, a Slovenian national daily)

Citizen journalists:
1. Angela Espinosa Ruiz (Spain): Spain-Belarus. Contrast of Concerns
2. Brendan McCall (USA): When Theatre is "Thought-crime"
3. Kiryl Kascian (Belarus): Assisting a Little-known Nation

Following the competition, a book of selected articles will be published in Belarusian and English. Articles submitted to the competition may also be viewed on the competition website (**focus.solidarityby.eu**).

Source: solidarityby.eu

Kiryl Kascian's comment:

The article "Assisting a Little-known Nation" was published as editorial in the Fall 2011 issue of *Belarusian Review* (vol. 23, No. 3). It marked the concept of that issue focusing on culture, language and identity of contemporary Belarus. It also dealt with problems which are to become core topics for the further development of our journal, along with politics and economy. I believe that this award signifies recognition of our editorial team efforts to modernize and re-conceptualize *Belarusian Review* and thus it belongs to the entire journal.



Laureates and organizers of the award ceremony
(c) Solidarity with Belarus Information Office
(c) Josef Gaffl

Belarusian Diaspora Urges Boycotting Ice Hockey World Championship

"All of us living in a free world should take the responsibility for gaining the release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners in Belarus," the Belarusian-American Association (BAZA) addresses the Belarusians of the world. "We should launch a world-wide campaign that will become a threat for Lukashenka, so that the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship, triumphant for him, will not be held in Belarus or will be boycotted by many countries."

BAZA offers a sample appeal that is supposed to be sent to governments, politicians, ice hockey federations and youth organizations, reports *Nasha Niva*.

The appeal refers to political prisoners in Belarus and calls to undertake efforts to influence the appropriate institutions, which, in turn, are able to have an impact on the person, who solely decides who must be imprisoned and released in Belarus – Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

BAZA urges Belarusian organizations throughout the world and individuals to inform the association about their activity in this field and assumes the responsibility for coordination of the campaign.

Earlier, the European Parliament and the US Congress has called for boycotting the Ice Hockey World Championship, scheduled to be held in Belarus in 2014.

Source: Charter97 Press Center, February 23, 2012

Free Political Prisoners in Belarus!

"Urge the International Ice Hockey Federation to suspend its 2014 Ice Hockey Championship in Minsk, Belarus until that country's long-time dictator, Alexander Lukashenka, releases all the country's political prisoners and issues a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus."

Former hockey star Peter Stastny and Marek Migalski, a fellow Member of the European Parliament.

http://www.change.org/petitions/iihf-suspend-the-2014-ice-hockey-championship-in-belarus

New Jersey Group Advocates Democracy in Belarus

Democracy activists victimized by the brutal crackdown in Belarus were the focus of the Belarusian-American Youth Association of Trenton, N.J., who met with Rep. Christopher Smith (R.-N. J) to raise basic human rights issues (including pertinent U.S. Legislation, authored by Smith).



Keeping the issue front and center can be key to saving lives under the Lukashenka dictatorship.

Smith, who is on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, is the author of the Belarus Democracy Act, and chairs the U.S. Helsinki Commission, which addresses human rights issues in Europe.

Source: Rep. Smith's Newsletter to Constituents

NEWS BRIEFS

January 6, 2012

Belarus President Aliaksandr Lukashenka Tightens Control Over Internet

Belarus' authoritarian government further tightened its control over citizens' access to Internet on Friday with a new law that obliges service providers to monitor users.

Reporters Without Borders, the media rights watchdog, condemned the new law in the former Soviet republic as the latest "stage in the government's escalating control of the Internet, adding new weapons of repression."

Belarus' authoritarian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka, who Western rights group have called "Europe's last dictator," has been in office since 1994, consistently suppressing opposition and cracking down on independent media.

The new legal amendments now bar Belarusian businessmen from using outside Internet resources such as online stores registered in other countries. The amendments formalize earlier restrictions on Internet use introduced by Lukashenka's decree, which required Internet service providers to monitor users and report them to authorities if they visit opposition websites blacklisted by the government.

Lukashenka won another term in office in a December 2010 vote that was marred by fraud and criticized by international observers. That election sparked massive anti-government protests brutally dispersed by police, who arrested about 700 people. Some are still in jail, including presidential candidates Andrei Sannikau and Mikalai Statkevich.

"This reinforcement of censorship is a survival reflex on the part of a government weakened by the unrest that followed President Lukashenka's disputed re-election in December 2010," Reporters Without Borders said in a statement.

Last year saw a wave of Internet-organized demonstrations against Lukashenka's rule by people who clapped their hands, stomped their feet or simply smiled. Initially caught by surprise, police quickly started rounding up demonstrators, and the parliament passed amendments that gave authorities formal justification for dispersing such protests.

Under rules introduced by Lukashenka in 2010, Internet users going online in an Internet cafe or using a shared connection have to identify themselves and a record is to be kept of each user's surfing history.

Source*: The Huffington Post*

.January 25, 2012

Iryna Khalip: Sannikau Asks Lukashenka For Freedom

Iryna Khalip, wife of the jailed Belarusian presidential candidate Andrey Sannikau says Sannikau was "forced" to author a letter to authoritarian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka asking for freedom.

It is not clear if Lukashenka has responded to the plea made by Sannikau in November.

Iryna Khalip, who visited her jailed husband on January 20, said in a statement on January 25 that Sannikau looked like "a man who had lived at least 10 years in Stalin's camps."

She said Sannikau passed her a note warning that he could be "killed at any time." Sannikau was an opposition candidate in the controversial 2010 Belarus presidential election, officially finishing second behind Luakshenka.

He was arrested after the election and sentenced to five years' imprisonment on charges of organizing mass disturbances.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

February 7, 2012

Belarus' gold, forex reserves up $52.3m in IMF terms

MINSK. February 7. KAZINFORM According to preliminary data Belarus' gold and foreign exchange reserves in IMF terms stood at $7,968.2 million as of 1 February 2012, up $52.3 million from the beginning of the year, BelTA learned from the Information Office the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus.

In national terms the gold and foreign exchange reserves amounted to $9,493.5 million, up $106.3 million in January 2012.

The increase has been facilitated by the higher price for gold on the international market and the positive surplus of foreign currency transactions at the Belarusian Currency and Stock Exchange. The National Bank and the government fully met external and domestic obligations in foreign currency; Kazinform cites BelTA

Source: KAZINFORM.

February 9, 2012

Gunnar Wiegand meets with opposition and civil society

The European Union's representative met with the leaders of the opposition and the civil society in Minsk.

According to the information provided by the BCD's press-center, Head of the European Commission's Unit for Relations with Russia as well as the acting director for Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, and Central Asia, in the Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations and OSCE Gunnar Wiegand has stated that the European Union is ready for the dialogue with the official Minsk. The EU is going to suggest a "plan for modernization and financial support of Belarus", but the dialogue depends on "a series of issues and will be conducted with the Belarusian opposition and the civil society acting as intermediates.

Source: European Radio for Belaru

February 14, 2012

Higher education becomes less affordable for most of population

For the third time the Ministry of Education is planning to raise tuition fees for higher education. De jure it is justified by salaries increase as of 1 January 2012 by 32.5%. However the real reason is the desire of the Ministry of Education to overcome the consequences of the devaluation in 2011.

It is not clear what would be the increase of tuition fees. Previously higher education institutions had a right to decide on their own. However, undoubtedly the following increase will hit the budgets of families where parents pay for their children's education.

At the same time the issue of increasing tuition fees becomes crucial for the majority of students, as higher education in Belarus becomes mostly paid. For instance, out of 105.7 thousand students in 2011, less than one third has been supported from the state budget (32.9 thousand). Student scholarships at public universities paid by the government vary from Br 376 to 601 thousand (i.e. from USD 45 to USD 70). The majority of students (53%) study in the capital.

For example, tuition fee in one of the most prestigious Belarusian Medical University at the end of 2010 amounted to Br 5.43 million per year (about $ 1,750 at the NBB rate). Current fee is Br 9.73 million per year (UDS 1158). With 50% increase the cost of tuition will reach Br 14.595 million or USD 1737. For the vast majority of Belarusian families this amount is unrealistic, in particular, bearing in mind that by the end of 2010 the average salary was USD 500, and by the end of 2011 it fell to USD 290.

Trends in the Belarusian higher education are as follows: 1) distance learning is becoming increasingly popular. Today about 60% of students of Belarusian universities are correspondence students. Over the next three years, the Ministry of Education plans to gradually reduce them to 30-40% of the total number of students. 2) Due to unfavourable demographic situation the country expects the cut-down in the number of students in the mid-term, therefore the Ministry of Education is planning to threefold the number of international students by 2015. Currently, international students make up 2% of all students (10 486 students from 84 countries). The government counts on students from Russia, Asia, Latin America and Africa.

In order to increase the share of international students and to ensure full integration of the Belarusian higher education at the European market of educational services, the Ministry of Education advocated for the access of Belarus to the Bologna process. However, this process is complicated by the fact that the Belarusian educational system is not regulated and often bears a hybrid nature: a Soviet model put on a market economy track. Among other things, universities do not enjoy autonomy and academic freedoms.

Moreover, visa sanctions introduced by the EU cause the reputational damage to the entire high school system of Belarus. After December 19, 2010 some rectors of Belarusian universities, in particular, Rector of the Belarusian State University were added to the “black list”. Certainly, it neither helps the openness of the Belarusian academic community nor strengthens the European dimension in the higher education.

Experts say that becoming part of the Bologna process will not alter the quality and structure of the education system significantly. At the same time, the very accession of Belarus to the Bologna process is still questionable. At a meeting of a working group of the Bologna Process, held on January 18-19 in Copenhagen, it was stated that Belarus fails to meet a number of accession criteria. The final decision on accession of Belarus will be taken on 26-27 April 2012 in Bucharest.

Source: Solidarity with Belarus Information Office

February 25, 2012

Belarusian Activist Jailed For Two Years

MINSK -- A court in the Belarusian city of Vitsebsk has found opposition activist Syarhey Kavalenka guilty of violating his parole and sentenced him to 25 months in jail.

Kavalenka, 37, is a member of the Belarusian Conservative Christian Party-Belarusian Popular Front.

He was arrested in December for the alleged parole violations.

He had been sentenced in January 2010 to three years of "limited freedom" for "illegally displaying the banned Belarusian national flag."

The latest trial, which started on February 21, had been suspended several times due to health problems apparently caused by Kavalenka's ongoing hunger strike.



Siarhiej Kavalienka

Relatives and supporters expressed shock at his gaunt appearance when he appeared for the latest court process.

Kavalenka, who has lost at least 25 kilograms since his arrest, has repeatedly said his case is politically motivated.

He was forcibly fed by prison guards in January but said he had resumed his hunger strike 18 days ago.

Poland's charge d'affaires in Belarus, Witold Jurasz, who attended the trial on February 24 and was permitted to briefly meet with Kavalenka, said he expected the European Union to state an official position on the case next week.

In accordance with the verdict in the flag-display case, Kavalenka had been ordered to report to local parole officers every Thursday and stay home between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Then on November 24, parole officers told Kavalenka's wife that "from now on [your husband] has to stay at home after 7:30 pm."

Kavalenka later refused to sign a document confirming that he had been informed about the changes to his parole regime and that he agreed to them.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

February 27, 2012

EU Introduces New Sanctions Against Belarus

On February 27, at a meeting in Brussels, foreign ministers of the EU member-states have expanded the "black list" of Belarusian officials and companies that are subject to the EU sanctions. "It is expected that the restrictive measures will affect the new officials and companies," said a diplomatic source in the EU.

According to a source, the "blacklisted" companies "will be only a few." At the same time the EU intends to freeze assets of 135 Belarusian officials and ban their entry into its territory,

As Telegraf previously reported, the EU Council adopted a resolution on February 10, which paves the way for the use of additional sanctions against individuals and entities in Belarus, which, according to the EU, are involved in violations of fundamental human rights in the country, said the spokesman of the Council of the European Union.

At the moment, the EU sanctions affect 210 people, and they are not only ministers and senior officials of security agencies of Belarus, but also judges and prosecutors, involved in criminal proceedings in "the case of December 19," the trial against Ales Beliatski, as well as some representatives of certain state-run media.

Source: Telegraf.by agency

March 2, 2012

Belarus-EU trade turnover increased by 153% in a year

Thanks to the European Union, which is now “at diplomatic war” with Belarus, this year’s Bealrus’ balance of foreign trade is positive. (Information from The National Statistical Committee.)

The turnover with the EU totalled 895.2 million dollars in January 2011 and 2 billion 264.9 millions – in January 2012. The export of Belarusian goods to the European Union has quadrupled! The import has only increased by 115%.

This year's balance of foreign trade is positive – 126.1 million dollars. But why? The balance of CIS trade is negative – 919.5 million dollars, the same can be said about the balance of Customs Union trade – 1 billion 172 million dollars, and Russia – 1 billion 210.3 million dollars! The balance of trade with Kazakhstan is positive – 38.3 million dollars. However, Belarus' balance of foreign trade has not become positive thanks to Kazakhstan. It is because of the European Union – the balance is positive and totals 1 billion 216 million 300 thousand dollars!

Source: European Radio for Belarus

March 5, 2012

IMF Rebuffs Belarus' Request for Loan

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that Belarus's leaders need to commit more strongly to economic reforms before it lends the country money.

The IMF said in a statement released on March 5 that the government and central bank had made progress over the past few months "on bringing down inflation."

But the statement said Minsk was not yet ready to begin talks on financial support.

The IMF said Belarus needed "a consistent package to restore stability and to embark on the path of deep structural reform."

It said the new program requires "an agreement among all policy makers."

The European Union carries a huge weight in the IMF, and relations between the EU and Belarus have grown increasingly strained recently.

Source: European Radio for Belarus

March 5, 2012

EU-Eastern Partnership Talks Held In Prague As Belarus Stays Away

PRAGUE -- The first ex-communist countries to join the European Union are now working to help bring former Soviet republics closer to the EU.

Meeting in Prague on March 5, Foreign Ministry officials from the Visegrad Four approved groundbreaking rules that will allow the new 'Visegrad Four Eastern Partnership" to begin its work.

The initiative is based on decisions made last June at a Bratislava summit of the Visegrad Four, which comprises Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.

It aims to support political and economic reforms in six former Soviet republics that are part of the European Union's Eastern Partnership program. Those countries are Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Belarus.

Belarusian Absence

But Belarus, amid deteriorating relations with Brussels, boycotted the talks, which also included EU foreign-policy chief Catherine Ashton, EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele, officials from the Baltic states, and the trade minister of Denmark.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg told RFE/RL that Belarus said it would not attend the meeting because Schwarzenberg had invited only the Belarusian deputy foreign minister, not Foreign Minister Syarhey Martynau.

In a joint statement issued in Prague, foreign ministers of the Visegrad Four and the Baltic states registered concern about developments in Belarus, including what they said was a lack of any improvement on human rights and the continuing repression of civil society combined with the absence of any deep democratic and economic reforms.

The foreign ministers also expressed concern about worsening relations between the EU and Belarus.

They stressed substantial change in Belarusian policies could pave the way for the resumption of political dialogue with Belarusian authorities.

They also called on Belarus to release and rehabilitate all political prisoners.

In the absence of a Belarusian delegation, foreign ministers from the EU's other five Eastern Partnership countries were introduced to the Visegrad Four's new initiative.

The Czech Republic, which currently holds the presidency of the Visegrad Four, says it is hosting the gathering in Prague because it wants the EU to pay more attention to the program with its eastern neighbors.

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

March 6, 2012

Administrative ban on bankruptcy

.The Head of the Highest Economic Court Mr. Kamiankou explained that economic courts started requiring a written confirmation from the local governments (i.e. owners of enterprises) that no other measures would improve the business. In other words, local administrations became liable for allowing bankruptcy.

"Nevertheless, the local administrations have been previously responsible for prevention of bankruptcies anyway. Firstly, bankruptcies have negative impact on the balance sheet statistics. Secondly, the loss-making enterprises were often used to receive subsidies, preferences, write-offs, etc. Thirdly, the introduction of an institution of crisis managers of insolvent enterprises opened a number of opportunities for the growth of "administrative rent".

If a company was steadily untenable to provide with additional administrative rent, local governments and agencies attached it to a consistently profitable business. As a result, the profitability of the latter lowered while the loss-making business remained unprofitable. That is the way the costs are redistributed between economic agents in Belarus, which is yet an additional obstacle to privatization.

Local governments' control over prevention of bankruptcies of private enterprises is significantly weaker but not nonexistent: officials follow their statistical reports. However, when it concerns private enterprises, it is much easier for creditors to file a suit to the court and the vast majority of decisions on bankruptcy concern private enterprises.

According to the Highest Economic Court of Belarus, on February 1, 2012, there were 1,517 cases of bankruptcy (in January 2011 - 1,412), of which 96.7% (1.467) cases related to the bankruptcy of private enterprises (in January 2011 - 95.3% or 1.347). Only fifty cases involved state-owned enterprises and companies with state-owned shares in the authorized capital (in January 2011 - 65).

Source: Solidarity with Belarus Information Office

THOUGHTS & OBSERVATIONS

EU Recalls Ambassadors As Belarus Expels European Envoys Over New Sanctions

By **Heather Maher, Rikard Jozwiak**

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton has announced that all EU members will recall their ambassadors to Minsk.

This move comes after Belarus asked the Polish and European Union ambassadors to leave the country and recalled its own envoys from Poland and the EU "for consultations" in a tit-for-tat response to an expansion of sanctions against it by Brussels.

Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrey Savinykh accused the EU of "continuing with its policy of unabashed pressure," and said, "In response, Belarus will forbid entry to Belarus to those individuals who helped introduce those restricting measures."

"The head of the EU delegation to Belarus and the ambassador of Poland to Belarus have also been asked to return to their capitals to bring the message to their leadership about the strong view in Belarus that any pressure or sanctions are unacceptable," Savinykh said. "If the pressure on the Republic of Belarus is to continue, other measures to defend our interests will also be taken."

Within hours, the EU responded through Ashton's spokeswoman, Maja Kocijancic, who said: "In expression of solidarity and unity, it was agreed that the ambassadors of the EU member states in Minsk will all be withdrawn for consultations to their capitals.All EU member states will also summon Belarusian ambassadors to their foreign ministries."

Subsequently, European Parliament President Martin Schulz said that "instead of choosing increasing self-isolation, Minsk should make the right choice for its people and open itself towards democracy."

Schulz said that as a first step, Belarus should "release unconditionally and rehabilitate all political prisoners."

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said that the United States joins its European partners "in calling on Belarus to end its repression of civil society and the democratic opposition."

.The unfolding diplomatic row came with a fresh reminder of the perceived abuses that the West has repeatedly condemned in Belarus, as the wife of a hunger-striking activist sentenced last week to two more years in prison told RFE/RL's Belarus Service that she'd been allowed to see her husband, and he looked "half-alive."

Warsaw issued a statement saying it regards Minsk's move as "an unfriendly step taken by Belarus towards the whole European Union."

On February 28, the European Council increased by 21 the number of sanctioned individuals connected with Lukashenka's regime who were targeted because of the ongoing repression of political opposition. More than 200 people were already on the bloc's blacklist.

The EU sanctions target actions Minsk has taken since the December 2010 presidential election, which Lukashenka won amid allegations of vote fraud. More than 700 people, including seven opposition political candidates, were arrested during and after the ensuing mass protests.

At a news conference in Brussels, EU enlargement commissioner Stefan Fuele said Minsk's reaction threatened to overshadow the bloc's goals on Belarus.

"Whatever is taking us away from the most important tasks -- and as I see them, the task No. 1 is to release all political prisoners and to rehabilitate them and second, to reengage with Belarus to the benefit of the citizens of Belarus -- is unhelpful and counterproductive."

Source: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 28, 2012

Why Did Slovenia Spare Belarusian Mogul From EU Sanctions?

By Richard Solash, Rikard Jozwiak

The European Union has agreed to add another 21 individuals to its expanding Belarus blacklist, a response to Minsk's continuing crackdown on the opposition, civil society, and the press.

But staunch opposition from member state Slovenia spared a 22nd person, Belarusian oligarch Yury Chizh, from the visa ban and assets freeze. Ljubljana threatened last week to veto the list, apparently over Chizh's inclusion. The 48-year-old mogul controls companies in energy, construction, real estate, retail sales, pharmaceuticals, and other sectors, and is a financier of Belarus's authoritarian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

Ljubljana's stance, which has angered some EU officials, appears to be driven by economic interests -- specifically, a Slovenian company's contract to build a controversial hotel in Belarus.

In a presidential decree issued on May 11, 2010, Lukashenka gave development rights for a tract of land in central Minsk to Elite Estate, which Belarusian media have reported is an arm of Chizh's holding company, Triple. Elite Estate was given the right to lease the area during construction work "without an auction" and was not charged the usual costs for the deal's paperwork.

The project, conceived in preparation for the city's hosting of the 2014 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Championship, features the planned five-star Kempinski Hotel. The nearly 23,000-square-meter building is meant to accommodate the expected influx of spectators. In total, the plan is estimated to cost more than 100 million euros ($134 million).

While local heritage-protection activists have protested the planned demolition of a historic power station, the deal has not generated major controversy.

That changed after the regime's brutal crackdown on the opposition in the wake of the disputed December

2010 presidential election. During the government's campaign to arrest hundreds and restrict civil liberties even further, European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, officials, and activists said Belarus was unfit to host the hockey tournament. They petitioned the IIHF to reverse its decision.

Riko Steps In

Despite the controversy, the Slovenian construction firm RikoGroup announced on February 20 that Chizh's Elite Estate had awarded it a contract to build the hotel and surrounding complex.

According to its website, Riko has been active in Belarus for a decade. In February 2011, the company announced a 54 million-euro ($73 million) deal with state energy company Minskenergo to construct two power stations.

Riko CEO Janez Skrabec reportedly invited Lukashenka to Slovenia for a skiing trip in 2004, when the Belarusian leader was under an EU-wide travel ban and Slovenia was slated to join the bloc within months.

On February 27, Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec said his country "couldn't agree with the fact that only one businessman was included" on the new EU sanctions list.

Local media quoted his office as saying Slovenia "supports restrictive measures imposed by the EU against Belarus and intended actions of the Belarusian authorities against those who violate human rights, preventing the development of democracy, and civil society."

"It continued: "We at Riko think that economic sanctions of the European Union against Belarusian companies would lead to an even greater shift of the economic flow of these companies from European partners to economic partners from the Russian Federation, China, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, etc. And this cannot be in the economic interest of the EU."

The company's statement said other EU members shared Slovenia's position. Slovenian media quoted unnamed sources as saying that Latvia also opposed the measures against Chizh. The oligarch has business interests in that Baltic country as well as in Lithuania, Germany, and other EU member states.

"**Source**: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 28, 2012

Slovenia – Belarus: Sometimes Silence and Absence Are More Eloquent than Words

By Polona Frelih

Slovenian foreign politics can be horribly wrong, was my thought when I heard about my country‘s decision to block the EU‘s move to include the Belarus tycoon Jury Čyž in the European black list. As a journalist, and unlike many diplomats, I can afford the luxury of being direct when it comes to injustice multiplied by political shortsightedness — for there are no other words for a situation when a man who has a dubious fame of being Europe‘s last dictator‘s personal banker got away with a cozy contract of 100 mln euros with a Slovenian firm. Press agencies wrote that not without a little help from his Slovenian friends that man once again got himself the right to do business as usual, which includes not only traveling to the EU countries but also allegedly keeping his banking accounts in Western Europe.

For me this bit was really hard to swallow if you consider that a part of my job is to inform the Slovenian public about current affairs in Belarus. For the last two years I have been reporting outrages of the Belarus police: activists thrown to prisons without just trial, substandard elections, repressions, repressions, and repressions. All that is the personal responsibility of the country‘s autocrat Aliaksandr Lukašenka and of whoever does business with him.

There is perhaps a balance between being pragmatic and cynical. After all, Slovenia is neither the first nor the last in the queue of the dictator‘s morally flexible partners. Previously Italian and then Latvian foreign ministries appeared among Čyž‘s patrons. However, one has to remember that fair play can also be surprisingly pragmatic, especially if you consider that the situation in that country is far from being politically stable. What looks as a tactical business advantage might prove to be a bitter fiasco in the long run. Last year‘s Russian failure on Libya illustrates the point: the country‘s hesitance to support the National Transitional Council resulted among other things in colossal losses in defense and petrol contracts. It is immoral to bet on dictatorships; neither it is wise to do so from a pragmatic standpoint. Here is another example. Just recently Telekom Austria has reported a 335 mln loss. It resulted, claims the company, in acquiring five years ago a 70 per cent share in the second-largest Belorus mobile operator, which turned out to be a thoroughly foolish investment because of the current economic turmoil and hyperinflation in Belarus. As was said, democracy is a bad form of government but all others are worse.

I am ashamed about the situation with the black list, but even more than that I regret that Slovenia has so easily added an extra burden on its economy in the times of the euro zone‘s debt crisis. As is known, a Slovenian state fund guarantees the contract, and that means that if the construction business fails that would have to be covered from the Slovenian tax-payers‘ pockets.

What matters here is what Slovenian politicians actually think of Belarus. Well, they do not really say. But sometimes silence and absence are more eloquent than words. Several weeks ago I was awarded a ”Solidarity with Belarus” prize in Warsaw for my piece on the country‘s youth. That was actually a high-profile event attended by the ambassadors of UK, France and other countries — but not Slovenia. Perhaps that is also a part of our official position — to deal solely with Lukashenko‘s regime but not with the opposition?

Ms. Polona Frelih** is Moscow correspondent for the Slovenian daily **Delo.

Another Putin's Presidential Term; Belarus-Russia Relations

Russia's presidential elections in any case affect Belarusian state and society. Close economic and political ties between two countries resemble a sort of misalliance. Recently we can observe the growing Russia's influence in Belarus both politically (considering strained relations of Belarus with the West) and economically (ever increasing and direct expansion of the Russian business in Belarus). Even though the results of the Russian elections are quite predictable, within the context of the Vladimir Putin's electoral rhetoric one may state that the Kremlin will adopt the course of further facilitation of integrating the post-Soviet area. Implementation of such policies directly concerns Belarus and its interests.

How do you assess the development of Belarus-Russia relations after Vladimir Putin's victory in Russia's presidential elections? Will Russia's economic pressure on Belarus increase and is there a real threat of Belarus' incorporation into Russia? — *Belarusian Review* addressed these questions to two well-known Belarusian political analysts — Alaksandr Łahviniec and Pavel Usov.

Alaksandr Łahviniec: The Belarusian authorities have put themselves in an impasse. Indeed, after the "self-reappointment" of Vladimir Putin, Russia will seek to take ultimate advantage of this situation. Despite the secrecy and scarcity of information on the agreements reached between Moscow and Minsk, there are reasons to assume that the strategy of the Russian authorities has been designed long ago and resulted in a meaningful leverage on Belarus, while Minsk has nothing left but to make gradual concessions.

The electoral campaigns in Russia only for a short time reduced Kremlin's public attention to Belarus. But the eagerness to achieve greater control over Belarus is evident. Obviously, the Kremlin needs a manageable and predictable client in Belarus who would faithfully pursue the necessary policies: geopolitical loyalty (non-participation in alternative initiatives such as the EU Eastern Partnership, following the Russia's foreign policy line), control of the country's strategic assets and the potential attraction of the relatively easily assimilated Belarusian labor force to Russia, strong economic linkage via the Customs and Eurasian Unions, including the introduction of the Russian ruble, guarantees for the domination of Russian mentality and language in Belarus.

The threat for Belarus is twofold: the loss of independence and chances for introducing democracy. If Łukašenka fulfils Russia's requirements, in course of time he will lose power and the country will forfeit its independence. If he refuses, his regime will continue sinking into a systemic crisis. Consequences for Łukašenka may be hardly predictable. Without political and ecnomic liberalization, a nation-wide Belarusian dialogue and rapprochement with the European Union this crisis cannot be overcome.

Alaksandr Łahviniec is civic activist, adviser to Dr. Alaksandr Milinkievič, chairman of the "Movement for Freedom" (Belarus).

Pavel Usov: Despite the fact that in the last two years we have witnessed unexpected political disturbances and overthrowss of seemingly immutable odious regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, we can hardly expect that the wave of revolution will reach Russia. Certainly, the Russian society is facing an unprecedented increase of protest sentiments; it feels the fatigue of being ruled by the FSB-clique, which erodes the country. At the same time, there are still many people who do not see any alternative to Putin; the political opposition is still very much divided, and its consolidation and formation of a united front can hardly be expected. In fact, in Russia the same processes is taking place as in Belarus; the society is tired and no longer wants to support the authorities, but still has no power to replace it.

Therefore, one should not expect an alternative candidate, who is not on the electoral list, to win elections in Russia. After Putin's victory one can expect strengthening of central power's pressure on civil society and opposition in order to prevent growth of their influence.

Beyond all doubts, Russia will continue its aggressive foreign policy. The Kremlin makes no secret of its plans to establish by 2015 a new empire, named Eurasian Economic Union. I would not be surprised if Putin decides to become the first chief of this association.

Belarus is the state most dependent on Russia, and that is why Moscow will most likely insist on the rapid adoption by Minsk of all union agreements up to the introduction of the single currency. Belarus already participates in six geostrategic projects with Russia and is not involved in any equivalent project with the EU. And if the Lukašenka's regime retains its domestic political sovereignty, it is very limited in its foreign policy manoeuvres.

Other most suitable subjects for integration are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. Negative trends taking place in Ukraine which, linked with its authorities' attack on democratic freedoms, make this country a suitable target for Russian claims. In other words, the less freedom there is in Ukraine, the greater is Russia's influence there.

It is possible that Russia will also include in this project the unrecognized republics of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria.

It is difficult to predict the stability of the new geopolitical formation (EAU). However, if it is established, Belarus for at least a few more years will be deprived of any opportunity to become a democratic European state.

Pavel Usov is chairman of the board of the Belarusian Center for European Studies.

Quotes of Quarter

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said: "Germany would recall its ambassador to Belarus and suggested other EU member states follow suit.

"This is the last dictatorship, this is the last dictator in Europe, and we will not let ourselves be intimidated by such actions against one European institution or against one member state"

CULTURE & SOCIETY

Post-WWII Soviet Policy On Religious Minorities in Belarus

Continued from the Winter 2011 issue of ***Belarusian Review***

By Leonid Smilovitsky

The Protestant Church

The Protestant Church in Belorussia - represented by several denominations (Pentecostals, Evangelical Christians, Lutherans and Seventh Day Adventists) - was quite active in the mid-1940s. Protestants were not treated with open hostility, as their congregations were few in number and relatively isolated. They were granted minimum facilities for religious observance, just enough to keep them from going underground.

In October 1944, as a result of political pressure, a national congress of Soviet Baptists and Evangelical Christians announced the unification of these two denominations and established the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists (AUCECB). Inside Belorussia, Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals formed an alliance in September 1945. Twenty-eight Protestant communities from the Bereza and Zhabinka Districts opposed this step. These communities refused to recognize the AUCECB leaders, claiming that they "had sold their souls to the Antichrist" embodied in the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, 83 groups did join the new union, and their members totaled 495 in 1946; 570 in 1947; and 640 in 1948. These are the official figures, though the actual number of adherents was purportedly higher.[1]

The community in Lida numbered 60 Baptists; there were over 100 in Gressk District, 250 in Starye Dorogi, and 258 in Zelva.[2] Some communities grew into communities of several hundred Baptists.

Local authorities tried to impede the activities of non-union Evangelical Christians, who were actively opposed to the Soviet State, its communism and its atheism, specifically by rejecting their applications to register congregations. In 1947 Evangelical communities in the Polotsk Oblast, in Rassony, Klichev and other places were outlawed. By 1948, the number of registered "sectarian"[3] communities shrank from 277 to 235, while many had to go underground. In the Bobruisk Oblast that same year there were 915 officially registered members and as many "illegal" ones.[4] This statistic indicates that perhaps 50% of this sect went underground.

When the regime launched repressive measures in 1949, Pan'ko, the leader of the Belorussian Evangelical Christians was among those leaders arrested. Dissident Protestants were prosecuted throughout Belorussia. A preacher from Krasnopol'y District was given a 15-year prison sentence for claiming that during the war it had been the Bolsheviks who persecuted religion, while the Germans provided "complete freedom." In 1949, when the collectivization campaign was launched in the western provinces of Belorussia, the level of religious repression became more severe. In the spring of 1949, in the village of Khvoyevo, in the Nesvizh District, not a single Baptist agreed to join the kolkhoz. In retaliation, the authorities arrested the local presbyter on charges of incitement. However, the sectarians did not succumb to the pressure and continued their religious practices clandestinely. During the period from 1948 to 1952, the number of parishioners of the Evangelical Christian church in Orsha grew from to 82 to 172, in Minsk from 148 to 270, and in Molodechno in the years 1948-1952 the community grew prodigiously. Most of the new congregants were young people.

In 1951, 15,800 Evangelical Christians were officially registered in Belorussia, 29.3% in the eastern provinces and 70.7% in the western part of the Republic, where Baptist influence was especially strong. By the end of 1954 the total number of Union Baptist communities in Belorussia had reached 155, with some 55,308 adherents.[5]

Seventh Day Adventists

Seventh Day Adventists, a small Protestant denomination, first settled in Belorussia at the beginning of the 20th century as a group who had split off from the German Lutheran community. Most of the Adventists found homes in Western Belorussia, where Polish and German Adventist missionaries were particularly active and where there was an especially large Adventist population in the Brest Region. In October 1946, six Adventist communities (in the regions of Brest, Grodno, Vitebsk and Pinsk) managed to get themselves registered. The number of Adventists in Belorussia is estimated at about 5,000 for the year 1948. Members of this sect were known for their aversion to Soviet policies and their violation of the law of universal compulsory conscription The congregation was so strongly opposed to army service that they preferred jail to allowing their children to enlist. Not only did Adventist families refuse to allow their children to attend school on Saturdays, but they used this

1 Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy,* London 1968, p. 21

2 NARB, F. 4, Op. 62, D. 162, pp. 98-99, 118-120.

3 The terms "sect" and "sectarian" were used pejoratively since Tsarist times to refer to religious associations formed by minority congregations or communities engaging in religious activities that were not officially approved. The Soviet regime never used the terms "congregation" or "community" for minorities such as Protestants, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, and Evangelic Christians, but consistently employed the word "sect" instead.

4 G.V. Nadalsky, *Baptism v proshlom i nastoyaschem* [Baptism in Past and Present], Minsk 1987, p. 18.

5 Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, Wipf & Stock, 1981, p. 12;

Michael Rowe, *Russian Resurrection: Strength in Suffering - A History of Russia's Evangelical Church*, London 1994, p. 23; A. Kotov, "Drama Belorusskoy tserkvi [Drama of the Belorussian church]," *Neman*, # 1 (1996), pp. 155-174; NARB, F. 4, Op. 29, D. 146, p. 67; Op. 62, D. 348, pp. 15-17.

day to participate in public prayers, to sing in parochial choirs and recite religious poems. (This defied the decree stating that children under 18 were forbidden to attend religious services). The Adventists were taught that obstacles and restrictions were in fact heaven-sent ordeals meant to strengthen their conviction in the rightness of their cause. In most places, the Soviet authorities reach the conclusion that the only way of dealing with the situation was to increase administrative pressure on those whom they regarded as dissidents.[6]

Islam

In Belorussia Islam was extremely small in comparison with the Russian Orthodox Church or Judaism. Its thirteen unofficial religious communities had been established by local Tartars in the prewar period, but after 1945 this number dropped drastically as only four succeeded in acquiring registration and becoming legal. These four communities were located in the districts of Minsk, Novogrudok, Baranovichi and Ivie. Young people were afraid of showing interest in Islam, and only elderly people attended mosques. The number of Muslims dropped further when some emigrated to Poland. In the Radun District, one of the oldest Muslim communities in Belorussia ceased to exist entirely after Mullah Leonid Muhklya left in 1946. This community had previously united Muslims from the villages of Vasilishki, Peski, Nekrashuntsy and some villages across the Lithuanian border. The Tartar community in Baranovichi was formally closed down by the authorities on the pretext of "lack of prospects," and the mosque was redesigned to become the House of Young Pioneers, to whom it was handed over. The mosque in Minsk was shut down in 1949 and the building assigned to the local branch of the Society for Voluntary Assistance to the Army and Navy (the DOSAAF). A letter of protest signed by 163 practicing Muslims was sent to Stalin but was ineffective in changing the situation.

The Muslim community of 98 families in the village of Dovbutiski, in the Smorgon' District, managed to survive for a few years. Local authorities allowed the mullah, Aleksandr Rafailovich, to hold occasional public prayers. The local tax office considered this fact to be an indication of official approval and recognized the community de facto by levying taxes on it. However, this community ceased its existence in the early 1950s, when only two Muslim communities in Soviet Belorussia were finally approved – one in the village of Muravshchizna, in the Ivie District, and the other in the village of Asmolovo, in the Nesvizh District.[7] In general, Belorussian Muslims, mostly Tartars, were few in number and tried to leave the Republic for better places (such as Poland, the Tartar or the Bashkir ASSR, the Volga Region and Siberia) where they could at least hope to retain the faith of their forefathers. Their number in the 1959 census in Belorussia was given as 8,654 or 0.1% of the total population of Belorussia.[8]

Judaism

Although the Nazi genocide of the war years had massively reduced the Jewish population of Belorussia, research on the postwar period shows that Judaism was regarded, along with Roman Catholicism and the Uniate Church, as an especially problematic protagonist in the conflict between state and religion in Belorussia and in the Ukraine. However, the religious communities thought otherwise and anticipated a more liberal attitude to religion and religious tradition following the war years.

After the defeat of Germany, Jews and other religious groups expected the authorities to stop putting obstacles in the way of religious practice. An optimistic feeling was prevalent that now everything was about to change for the better. This patriotic mood was reflected in the "Victory Prayers" offered up at the war's end in many synagogues in Belorussia, the Ukraine and Russia. These prayers praised the triumph of Russian arms, the contribution of all the USSR's nations to the defeat of their common foe and the prowess of their military leader, Stalin, in his capacity as Supreme Commander-in-Chief. At the first conference of commissioners (upolnomochennye) of the CARC in July 1945, commissioners from different parts of the country cited a number of applications from religious Jews wishing to incorporate a special prayer for Stalin's well-being into synagogue services, similar to the one recited for the Tsar prior to 1917.[9]

However patriotic the Jews were, they still had to contend with the totalitarian that was at the heart of Stalin's version of socialism. Moscow regarded Russian Jewry as a whole with deep suspicion on account of its newly acquired capacity of appealing to world public opinion. The great powers, especially the U.S., were highly sensitive to the situation in which Soviet Jewish Holocaust survivors found themselves. The State made major efforts to conceal all information concerning them, to reject humanitarian aid, and to impose arbitrary restrictions on religious activity, thus depriving them of the elementary conditions for the observance of their faith. In Belorussia the communist party committees and local councils were particularly stringent in clamping down on Jews who had any ties with abroad. Not only did the authori-

6 A.I. Klebanov, *Religioznoe sektanstvo v proshlom i nastoyashchem* [Religious Sects in Past and Present], Moscow 1973, p.25; M.P. Kulakov, *Ne v bezdeyatel'nom ozhidanii vtorogo prishestviia*, Moscow 1989, p. 12; Marite Sapiets, *True Witness: The Story of the Seventh Day Adventists in the Soviet Union*, Keston, Kent 1990, p. 19.]

7 A. Benningsen and M. Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, London 1983, p. 31; A.Benningsen and S.E. Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire*, London 1986, p. 44; U. Navitsky (above, note 4), pp. 262-263; Y. Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce*, Warszawa 1989, p. 14; S.U. Dumin, I.B.Kanapatsky, *Belaruskiya tatary: minulaye i suchastnostz* [Belorussian Tartars: Yesterday and Now], Minsk 1993, p. 11; I.B. Kanapatsky, A.I. Smolik, *Gystorya i kultura Belorusskih tatar* [The History and Culture of Belorussian Tartars], Minsk 2000, p. 35.

8 *Itogi Vsesouznoy perepisi naselenia 1959 goda. SSSR (svodny tom)* [Results of the 1959 All-Union Population Census (Combined Volume), Moscow 1962, p. 206.

9 Informative report exclusively for the CARC staff members, Moscow, June 5, 1945: GARF, F. 6991, Op. 3, D. 8, p. 194.

ties want to prevent the entry of religious literature and ritual supplies, but they also feared the dissemination of information about their repressive policies in the Western world. Consequently, Belorussian Jews were generally unable to benefit from the much needed and eagerly proffered help from Jewish communities overseas.

After the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, the situation did not improve. Any small indication that a Jew held of a favorable attitude towards Israel was denounced by the media as a manifestation of "Jewish bourgeois nationalism," a lack of patriotism and a readiness to collaborate with the U.S. and other imperialist powers.

In these circumstances, the Belorussian authorities usually responded with scarcely concealed irritation to any attempts on the part of Jews to have their congregations registered, although this privilege was granted much more easily to the adherents of other religions. From the Soviet regime's perspective, its refusal to register Jewish congregations or to return houses of prayer was needed to weaken the mostly elderly adherents of the Jewish religion, and to discourage young and middle-aged Jews from joining such congregations. Soviet Jews were discouraged from visiting synagogues or prayer houses, prohibited from establishing yeshivot, from educating their children at Jewish schools, and from attending Torah studies. Moreover, Jews were forbidden from practicing ritual slaughter (shehitah), from performing ritual circumcision (brit milah), from marrying under the traditional bridal canopy (hupa) and even from burying their dead in accordance with Jewish ritual. Baking unleavened bread (matzot) for the Passover Festival was also severely restricted.

But paradoxically, in post-war Belorussia, in its potential for growth and expansion and in its vigor, Judaism exceeded the other religions. For example, a surprisingly large number of applications were submitted for the return of synagogue buildings, for opening new prayer houses and for registering congregations were submitted by Jews and their representatives to the local authorities. Jews also requested permission to celebrate their festivals by baking matzot for Passover or organizing prayers on the High Holidays. These requests for permits reflected the strong religious feelings among the Jewish population as well as their fear of performing their traditional rituals without first obtaining permission from the authorities. Old people were often afraid that the authorities would retaliate against their children.[10]

Stalin's death in 1953 aroused an ambiguous response among the Jewish public. A period of mourning was proclaimed in some communities, memorial services for Stalin were held in the two officially registered synagogues and in many of the unofficial prayer houses, and some people wept. Telegrams and letters expressing "deep grief" were sent to Moscow. Patriotic eulogies were delivered from public forums, where Jews offered prayers for the government, for the party, for the new premier, Georgii Maksimilianovich Malenkov, and some even wore black armbands. At the same time, people were ecstatic when just one month after Stalin's death they heard the radio announcement by the Interior Ministry exculpating all the doctors allegedly involved in the Doctors Plot[11], six of whom were Jewish; Stalin had accused the doctors of plotting to poison and kill members of the Soviet leadership.

After the war, then, Jews were much more disadvantaged than members of most other faiths. Despite the tragedy of the Holocaust which had reduced their numbers by up to 80 percent, survivors in Belorussia did not receive any sympathy from the local inhabitants, nor any understanding from the State itself. No gratitude was shown for all the heroism and sacrifices of the Jews who had fought with the Red Army or with the partisans. Jewish illusions that the regime would permit a revival of traditional life after the liberation of the Republic soon evaporated.

Nevertheless, instead of resigning themselves to their lot, Jews continued to preserve the tradition in all ways possible. The postwar history of the mutual relationship of the Jews with the Soviet authorities in Belorussia (on both the local level and on the level of the Republic) provides us with many examples of their tenacity. The regime proved unable to eliminate the last remnants of religious activities or to destroy the vestiges of Jewish identity and tradition that remained after the ravages of World War II.

Conclusion

Thus, after the end of the war with Germany, a new internal political situation arose in the Soviet Union. The weakening of the open pressure on religious communities allowed the hope for achieving a consensus between the state and the believers. At the same time, the state's attitude toward one or other religious cult differed substantially. This was most evident in Belarus. It was a border republic with a traditionally multiethnic population, with absence of a mono-confessional system. In Belarus, with its compact territory, most basic confessions were reflected (?): Greek Orthodoxy, the Roman Catholic church, Protestantism, Islam, and Judaism. The state's attitude toward some was generally lenient, others were de-facto supported, and activities of the rest were limited in many ways, or persecuted.

The regime displayed its most negative attitude toward the Roman Catholic church, and Judaism. The church condemned the Soviet occupation of Western Belarus in 1939, and after the war it became a leading opponent of the sovietization policy in Belarus. Therefore, in its relations with the church, the authorities pursued a

10 L. Smilovitsky, "Struggle of Belorussian Jews for the Restitution of Possessions and Housing in the First Post War Decade," *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 30, No 2, Winter 2000, pp. 53-70. http://www.jewishgen.org/Belarus/newsletter/restitution.htm

11 The Doctors' plot was an alleged conspiracy to eliminate the leadership of the USSR. Jewish doctors were accused of poisoning the top Soviet leadership. After the death of Stalin in March 1953, the new Soviet leaders declared that the case was fabricated.

tion. Their communities could not be registered without obstacles; it was forbidden to establish synagogues, even for contributions; educating community and religious leaders was impeded - as well as publishing religious literature. All inhabitants of Belarus, who wanted to observe their religious traditions, were subject to strict regulation. The state intervened in all facets of the believers' life — beginning with the ceremonies of baptism (for Christians) and circumcision (for Jews) — to the ceremonies of burials and remembering the deceased.

The participation of religious confessions in international communication and exchange with other religious centers was categorically prohibited. Nevertheless, the believers' fight for their rights continued. It remained hidden from external observers, yet it secretly existed throughout all post-war years.

The rebirth of religious life in the republic, beginning in the middle of 1980s, became a natural phenomenon. It signified the end of the moral, ideological and political confrontation of believers of various confessions with the communist regime that destroyed thousands of lives and delayed the spiritual development of Belarus for many decades.



Dr. Leonid Smilovitsky

Leonid Smilovitsky (1955), born in Belarus, Ph.D. (1984), researcher at The Byelorussian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War (1979-1980), associated Professor at The Belarus State University of Culture (1981-1992), Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (1994-1995), and now in Diaspora Research Center of Tel Aviv University (1995 - till now).

Author of the three monographs: *Jews in Belarus. From Our Common History, 1905-1953*, Minsk 1999, and *Holocaust in Belorussia, 1941-1944*, Tel-Aviv 2000, *Jews in Turov. History of Shtetl in Mozyr Polesye Region*, Jerusalem 2008, and more than one hundred publications in the field of history of Belarus and Belarus Jewry.

Most important papers could be achieved at:

http://www.jewishgen.org/Belarus/newsletter/authors.htm

http://souz.co.il/clubs/read.html?article=2/22&Club ID=1

http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/ggcenter

Leonid Smilovitsky: Censorship Uses the Dull Scissors of Arbitrariness Instead Of The Sharp Knife of Intellect

The correlation between censorship and freedom of speech, as well as the effect of this issue on the social-political life of any state , has been for a long time, and is even now very relevant. Belarus is no exception. Having been a part of the Soviet Union from the beginning of its existence (although within varying administrative boundaries), Belarus and its population experienced the complete evolution of the Soviet system, when the state was able to establish wide-ranging control over life and political awareness of its citizens. The existence of censorship represented one of such means used by the state to influence the society. What were the forms and methods of implementing this influence, and to what extent did censorship affect various spheres of life in the post-war Belarus? These issues are being researched by Prof. Dr. Leonid Smilovitsky in his new book "Censorship in Postwar Belarussia, 1944 - 1956" (Jerusalem, 2012), prepared for print within the research framework of the Goldsein-Goren Diaspora Center at the University of Tel-Aviv. The following interview with the author presents the readers of *Belarusian Review* the main conclusions of his new book.

Belarusian Review (BR): *What prompted you to focus on this particular topic?*

Leonid Smilovitsky (LS): Through its attitude toward censorship, a state shows its consideration toward its citizens — whether it trusts or fears them. Do you know who was most persistent in exposing censorship? The Communists! Karl Marx compared censorship to a quack, who is content with driving a rash inside, without worrying that it may destroy the whole organism. Censorship does not destroy the conflict of thoughts; it transforms it from an open to a hidden form, by using the dull scissors of arbitrariness instead of the sharp knife of intellect.

However, after usurping power, the Bolsheviks immediately changed. While before the revolution the editor and writer together fought the censor, under the new conditions the communist editor and the communist censor joined forces to fight the writers in order to exploit the latter's creativity in the interests of the dictatorship of proletariat. The Soviet censorship did not recognize the possibility of compromise; its decisions were not subject to appeal. If, prior to 1917 censors' removals of printed text were marked by suspension dots, then under the Soviet power deletions of text were not marked at all; they were impossible to figure out.

BR: *What is the extent of researching the issue of censorship in the Belarusian SSR?*

LS: Up to now, the description of censorship in Belarus has been scarce and reluctant.True — considering that prior to 1991 there was complete silence, something has since appeared. However, the subjective nature and exposing pathos of newspaper reports cannot fully reveal the nature of censorship. How did this "machine" operate? Who set it in motion? Among the scholars who have touched on this topic , one may mention only a few names: A. Guzhalovsky, V. Matokh, V. Rakashevich, and A.Velikiy. However, all of them wrote about censorship prior to 1941. In the post-war period , a distinct vacuum appeared.

BR: *Why did this happen?*

LS: Historical analogies are both terrifying and exposing. I myself would never write this work, while living in Belarus. Only after leaving its boundaries, have I found the oportunity to properly evaluate the past and present of our Homeland. This is not because "one sees the big better from a distance." Objective research is only possible in conditions when the author does not depend on the political situation.

BR: *On what kind of sources is the book based? What circle of readers is it adressed to ?*

LS: They are mainly unique archival documents, supplemented by testimonies, found in scholarly and popular editions, statistical collections and periodic press. They were enriched by memoirs of former employees of censorship structures, mass information media, printing and publishing houses, journalists, writers and artists, who, in performing their necessary work , had the opportunity to become familiar with the work of the Glavlit BSSR (General Directorate for the Protection of Military and State Secrets in the Press attached to the Council of Ministers).

While working with these sources and testimonies , it was often necessary to lower the emotional tone — in order to preserve an unbiased appproach in describing events.

BR: *Does the book contain illustrations ?*

LS: Special attention has been devoted to illustrations. Readers have been presented with a collection of rare documents describing the functioning of censorship, photographs of Glavlit's supervisors, diagrams and statistics of separate regions and of the entire republic . The book contains extensive and very eloquent lists of prohibited works. The chapter on censorship of satire and humor contains characteristic cartoons by Belarusian artists.

BR: *What were the most important specific features of the censorship in the period between 1944 and 1956?*

LS: The censorship was multifaceted (ideological, governmental, military, economic, informational) and all this was intricately intertwined.

One could not write anything about accidents, economic miscalculations, international conflicts or negative social phenomena. Prohibitions were applied not only to publications in the humanitarian and exact sciences, but even to entire directions of science such as nuclear physics, cybernetics, biology, genetics, psychology, sociology. The legitimacy of the Soviet system's existence was not a subject for discussion.. The role of deceit , or as some authors called it " premeditated disinformation,"was extremely important in propaganda.

BR: *What were the specific features of the entire Soviet censorship system?*

LS: Its main peculiarity consisted in the absence of alternatives. Private publications were non-existent. Anything printed without the authorities' permission, was considered a rebellious act. Any information from abroad was termed ideological diversion, subject to persecution.

Despite the absence of a law on state secrets, the Criminal code contained an article on the responsibility for its divulgence. The authenticity of an event was not a condition for publication.

The general atmosphere of suspicion impeded economic integration, humanitarian cooperation and human contacts. Censorship encroached upon the creative process initiated by personalities of culture, education, art, and science. Moreover, Glavlit compiled lists of books, prohibited for sale; it also issued rules and instructions fulfillment of which was mandatory for all press organs. Without the censor's approval not a single product could appear in public — down to a postage stamp, business card, a match label, or an invitation ticket.

BR: *When did the censors resume their work in the BSSR ?*

LS: Immediately, with the beginning of the republic's liberation. The censors, along with representatives of CC CP (b)B and CM BSSR moved from Moscow first to Gomel, and from there to Minsk (July-August, 1944). Stamps, forms and other materials necessary for office work, general and secret correspondence were soon manufactured.

Glavlit occupied a floor in the left-hand wing of the Government house (*Dom Pravitelstva*). A group responsible for controlling publications was located in the printing shop of the Science Academy, opposite the House of press. Permanent "sites" of Glavlit (each employing one person) were placed in the Belarusian Telegraph Agency. Other, onetime inspections checked movie rentals, theaters and the post office. After Stalin's death in 1953 the Glavlit of the BSSR was transferred from the jurisdiction of the BSSR Council of ministers to the staff of MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) on Volodarsky Street , occupying the entire second floor of the former Management of the rear section of the Belarusian military district.

BR: *And what about the party's "eye"?*

LS: Glavlit coordinated all its actions with the Central Committee of the Belarus' Communist party. The regional censorship administrations were responsible before regional party committees, and the district administrations — before the office of the district committee. Meetings of regional and city Glavlit administrations were held at least three times a month, with an invited representative of the press from the party's regional committee and a responsible person from the State Security ministry.

While Glavlit had at its disposal an army of officials-censors, the propaganda section had an army of editors, operating in parallel. Instructors from the party committees issuied everyday directions, impossible to disobey. Everything was subordinated to the main goal: to secure control over the citizens' moods, to force their belief in the correctness of adopted decisions, to seek their execution.

BR: *How were the censors selected?*

LS: Most of the new censorship's associates were not familiar with the work expected of them. In December 1944 19 (!) out of 22 censors turned out to be beginners. Their longest service record did not exceed 1 1/2 years. The republic became a destination of Moscow promoted workers.

The "initiation" procedure foresaw a *signed pledge about non-divulgence of service secrets,* which, along with a permit to work with secret documents was filed under Personal Matters. Under no circumstances was it permitted to communicate whatever became known while working in censorship (including relatives and family members). Persons who quit their work with Glavlit, were immediately removed from the records with the Ministry of State Security.

BR: *Had prospective censors been trained anywhere?*

LS: Most censors were self-educated. Specialists were selected from those having higher humanitarian education, usually from philologists, journalists and historians. Censors learned "on the job": through industrial training, participation in seminars, conferences of mass media and censorship workers, the party education system.

BR: *One of the most intriguing chapters of the book is entitled 'The Curtain of Secrecy." What is meant by it?*

LS: It is the issue of censorship's interference in citizens' everyday life, secret mail inspection, military "secrets," preservation of imaginary service secrets in the fields of agricul-

ture, industry and construction, health care, ecology.

One could not encounter in publications any testimonies about ethnic conflicts, anti-Semitism or displays of dissent, malnutrition, infectious diseases, infant mortality, criminality, etc. Criticism of shortages and mistakes was permitted only at the beginning or intermediary levels. It could include satirical articles, letters from working people , and the authorities' reactions to them. At the same time, the censors did not pass information about abuses of service positions or misappropriation of humanitarian aid by members of the authorities' higher ranks.

BR: *How was the censorship implemented in publishing activities?*

LS: Intense attention was dedicated to printing activities (typography). It combined the sides of the conditional triangle; authority organs - printing production - the reader. Control over the finished production was facilitated by the fact that all phases of the publishing process were in the same hands.

Most orders were carried out by the Stalin Press in Minsk and regional polygraphic enterprises in Brest, Gomel, Mogilev, Vileyka and lithography in Grodno. In 1947 there were 192 printing presses in the BSSR; two years later their number grew to 207. Separate printing presses were operated by the CC CP(b)B, the BSSR Council of ministers, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of State Security, Central Council of Professional Unions, State University, the Minsk regional party committee, Academy of Sciences, Headquarters of the Belarusian military district, and some industrial enterprises. They first and foremost produced classic works of Marxism-Leninism, school textbooks, mass agitation and literature, dedicated to the Communist Party history. This production filled all bookshop shelves.

There also existed the so-called minor print production, distinguished by its endless variety: invitation tickets, calendars, service documentation, posters, programs, librettos, etc. The number of these products grew constantly, and all of them were allowed to be produced only under the Glavlit visa.

BR: *What did you succeed in discovering concerning the work of special depositories?*

LS: After the war, there were six depositories of confiscated printed production in the the BSSR. Three of them were associated with the regional libraries in Vitebsk, Grodno, and Mogilev, and three additional ones — in Minsk: with the State Lenin's Library, the Governmental Maxim Gorky Library, and the Fundamental Library of the BSSR Academy of Sciences. In 1951 the Belarusian State museum of the Great Patriotic War opened a special depository fund for editions published during the German occupation. They were preserved on equal basis with absolutely secret documents.

The number of visitors to special depositories was extremely limited. It was necessary to explain the reason for reading materials containing "slander of the Soviet social system"? Such people immediately became objects in the field of vision of security organs. Unfortunately, the framework of this interview does not allow citing intriguing examples of what precisely was preserved in the republic's depositories. However, the book presents it extensively, with a scrupulous indication of sources.

BR: *How often were the library stocks examined?*

LS: Oh, this is a very interesting topic. The "Harmful literature" was conditionally divided into three basic categories: 1) printed production, published during the occupation, 2) books subject to confiscation in accordance with orders by the SSSR Glavlit, obsolete editions, works by disgraced authors and by "enemies of the people.", 3) books, not yet included in general prohibited lists. The last category basically included Belarusian publications that were independently declared as defective by the BSSR Glavlit.

There was, for example, a "List of persons whose books are subject to removal from public libraries and the book market in the period between 1938 and 1950." Every tenth work was marked as "fiction," often with encodings — "poetry, drama, prose, literature critique. Distribution of this list was shrouded in secrecy. Such lists used to be received for a limited term, after which they were transferred for closed preservation in the library's section of secret office work. The lists were accompanied by laconic annotations, noting the censors' motives. Some remarks were significant, for instance: " Do not include in the list of books to be removed, yet effectively remove from libraries."

In order to preserve valuable editions, whose prefaces were written by "politically compromised authors," deletions were introduced. Corrections were entered by librarians under supervision by censors. During the removal of prefaces or entire articles it was necessary to mark cross-outs (deletions) on title pages, in headlines, or even on book covers. Cross-outs were made in a way that made it impossible to recognize the obscured word or phrase, yet without damaging the book's external appearance.

BR: *In what way did censorship touch on national and religious policies in the BSSR - concerning both the titular nation and other nationalities in the republic?*

LS: Despite the fact that after the war all religious confessions testified as to their loyalty to the state, removal of the religious literature was being implemented everywhere. In 1947 in the BSSR 17,343 books with religious content were destroyed. The shortage of religious literature sometimes brought about curious consequences. In 1948 the republic's bookstands received from Moscow the reproduction of the painting by Raphael Santa 'The Sistine Madonna," which then believers bought up and used as an icon. The CC CP(b)B then ordered collecting reproductions of the famous painting and returning them to Moscow, as "not realized due to lack of demand."

In children's books the censors modified the poem by A.S . Pushkin by replacing the words "God's bird " with "dear bird." (*Gypsies*, 1824).In re-publishing the book by Stepnyak-Kravchinski, previously banned in czarist times, exclamations "Lord" and "My God! " were deleted throughout.

BR: *Was censorship in the BSSR related to prohibitions of foreign literature ?*

LS: Yes, absolutely! In Minsk the section of foreign control was located in the Central Telegraph agency, whose employees were forbidden to communicate with foreigners. Materials received by telegraph were transferred to the section of censorship control that issued permissions to send messages abroad. Representatives of foreign mass media, were notified about the prohibition of information transfer only in those cases when their communications were detained completely.

The post office in the capital inspected all editions to be sent abroad (via air mail). The customs office in Brest inspected everything imported by train. Prohibited books were removed, and confiscation notices were inserted in the printed matter envelopes or wrappings. If censors did not manage to inspect the imported literature, the addressee simply did not receive it.

In the fall of 1947, an instruction was issued, according to which a book printed in Russian should not contain titles in foreign languages both on covers as well as in text — so that the original information source is not shown. The next

step was prohibiting subscriptions for foreign representations (embassies, missions, individual citizens). Exporting abroad the following items was prohibited: press, manuscripts, schematics, geographic, topographic or geological maps, drawings, photocopies, negatives on glass or films of these materials.

BR: *The literature nowhere refers to the censorship of second-hand bookshop sales. Do you write about it in your book ?*

LS: The censors watched second-hand bookshops much more strictly than libraries. In Belarus there functioned three second-hand book shops — in Minsk, Vitebsk and Grodno. Their literature was inspected twice a week! Books that passed inspection were provided with an official stamp — as often as the book was returned to the store.

Between the fall of 1945 and the summer of 1947 the Minsk second-hand bookshop sold almost 20,000 books. Literature of the pre-revolutionary and Soviet eras, representing bibliographic rarities, was personally evaluated by the store's director. In the middle of 1950s the second-hand book trade presented a sorry spectacle. A country that declared itself the world's most literate, that was proud of the unprecedented number of printed copies and of the accessibility of books, reduced its second-hand book trade to a level at which it played no role in the cultural and scholarly life of its society.

BR: *I was most impressed by the book's 6th chapter " Sphere of Culture and Art." What does it tell us ?*

LS: It deals with the time when censorship "tormented" fiction literature, writers, poets, playwrights, composers, musicians, artists, sculptors, when it "twisted" intelligentsia's hands by means of "creative unions." The party has pushed beyond the threshold of literary life all those who attempted to declare their creative freedom. Figuratively speaking, one may name three types of Soviet writers: the perished, the stifled, and the conformed. These are not just generalizations. There are many concrete names and examples.

Fiction literature and the arts were transformed into an ideal propaganda instrument. Its heroes were doomed to commit positive deeds and to display their inflexible loyalty to the regime.

BR: *Besides Glavlit there also existed Glavrepertkom. What kind of organization was it ?*

LS: Its full name was: Main Administration of control over spectacles and repertoirs attached to the BSSR Council of Ministers. Together with Glavlit its officials controlled *Belgosestrada, Belgosfilgarmonija*, all theaters, cinemas, museums, exhibitions, graphic arts, amateur activities, music recordings, literature translations, satire and humor. One may talk about it in detail. For instance, there was a rule, according to which the concert brigade of *Belgosestrada*, when beginning its tour, at first registered with the militia (local police station) and then visited the commissioner of Glavlit. The censor, after familiarizing himself with the repertoire, placed the stamp "Permitted", indicating the tour's term in the given district (city). This procedure was repeated as many times, as was the number of places visited by the concert brigade. After its return to Minsk the itinerary documents were deposited in Glavlit offices.

BR: *After all, there existed not only prohibitions. After Stalin's death some changes began..*

.**LS:** Not quite so. Censorship changed its "clothing," but not its essence. Now came the time to scrap the works of Stalin's comrades in arms, who were now blamed for past mass acts of lawlessness. Along with Tsanava's "works" the literature, which praised the masterminds and perpetrators of mass repressions was also rejected. Among the first, in April 1953, was the removal of the article collection "Watchfulness — our weapon." (100,000 copies).

In the second half of the 1950s most Belarusian writers and public figures that had previously been repressed and accused of National-Democratism, were rehabilitated. At the same time, this information kept further being deleted from encyclopedias, reference books, documentaries and fiction.

BR: *To sum up your research, may one speak of what general conclusions?*

.**LS:** The existence of the Soviet state as a system of forcible suppression of personality and ignoring economic laws of development would have been impossible without censorship. Limiting the freedom of reception and exchange of information was required for extending the existence of the odious regime.

Entire layers of of knowledge and ideas ceased to exist; names of many political and public figures, and scholars, as well as directions of thought disappeared. Problems that earlier agitated the minds of people were committed to oblivion. Testimonies of each individual concerning his real life were restricted by speculative observations. Glavlit secured the imaginary unity of the party and people, bringing into everyday consciousness the official viewpoint on all issues of state development.

All arguments in favor of preserving censorship as a defensive state mechanism do not hold water. Censorship secured the dictates of party committees, the camouflage of the Soviet institution in administering the country, and the absolute state domination over the minds and affairs of its citizens. The decline of censorship turned out to be natural, along with the end of Soviet regime, strained under the burden of its problems.

BR: *I know that the ending of your book prepared for the reader "candy"of a sort. What does it represent?*

.**LS:** You are right. I have enclosed in the appendix not only the most significant documents: lists of works with Glavlit's resolution , a biographical directory, an inventory of newspapers, publishers and mass information media, a vocabulary of abbreviations, personal and geographic indexes... As well as a selection of aphorisms, quotes and pithy expressions, describing censorship. This is a part of my collection I have been accumulating for many years.

BR: *When, where and who will publish the results of your research ?*

LS: This is a question that occupies me now most. In contrast with my previous works the monography about censorship in Belarus has found itself in a special situation. Since it is completely devoted to the Belarusian topic , Jewish foundations cannot finance it; there is no reason to... Due to understandable reasons the official structures in Minsk are not interested in its appearance. The topic, its protagonists, the subject matter, approaches, passions not to be taken lightly that have evolved in these recent years — all of them are very recognizable. This is why the Belarusian Diaspora should have its say. And what is your opinion? On this occasion, I would like to encourage everyone who has all possible data, dealing with censorship's activity in Belarus after WWII. Please, feel free to contact me on smilov@zahav.net.il.

SPORTS

Victoria Azarenka crushes Maria Sharapova to win Australian Open title

- *Belarusian cruises to 6-3, 6-0 straight-sets success*
- *She also becomes new world No.1 after maiden slam title*

By Simon Cambers

Eleven months ago, Victoria Azarenka was considering quitting _tennis, _unsure of whether she really wanted to give the sport her all. On Saturday, with a performance full of power and maturity, she became a grand slam champion and the world No1.

The 22-year-old's 6-3, 6-0 demolition of _Maria Sharapova in the Australian Open final here in Melbourne was as much a surprise as it was impressive. With three grand slam titles under her belt, it was expected that Sharapova would bring her experience to bear on the big occasion. But with her powerful game malfunctioning, Azarenka took advantage to record the biggest win of her career.



After falling to her knees and staring towards her player box with a look of disbelief, the reality of what she had achieved began to sink in. She is the 21st woman to top the rankings since they began in 1975 and the first woman from Belarus to do so.

"It's a dream come true," she said, having accepted the trophy from the former champion, Martina Hingis. "I have been dreaming and working so hard to win the grand slam and being No1 is a pretty good bonus for that." Having changed into a T-shirt that said "I got this" for her media commitments, Azarenka said she was looking forward to celebrating. "I think I am just going to have champagne showers," she said.

The match was billed as the battle of the screamers and the grunts reached 94.3 decibels according to the Whoo-ometer of local broadcaster Channel 7. But it was Azarenka who screamed last as another errant Sharapova backhand went astray.

"Right after the win I couldn't understand what's happening," she said. "I could not believe the tournament is over because it's been so long, this road since Sydney. I didn't have one day off so it kind of kept going, kept going and right now it still hasn't hit me that it's over and I won this. I keep enjoying it."

With so much on the line, it was no surprise to see Azarenka start poorly, with two double faults in the first game to hand Sharapova the break on the way to a 2-0 lead. In the next game, the Russian led 30-0 on the Azarenka serve, but the Belarussian dug deep to hold and, from then on, she relaxed.

How she played, though, was a revelation. From 3-3 in the first set she won nine straight games, ripping apart a below-par Sharapova with a combination of force and greater agility. The Russian's gameplan was to attack, but her radar was off – she hit 30 unforced errors – and she was completely outplayed.

The only question was whether the nerves would return for Azarenka as she tried to serve out for victory. But she saved a break point and then, when Sharapova's backhand found the net, she sank to the ground, her head in her hands.

"I was super nervous," she said. "I couldn't wait to actually go on the court and play. It was a long wait. The first two games were a little bit of a disaster, but then I kind of got the momentum going and I relaxed."

As she left the court, after signing a stack of autographs, Azarenka texted her grandmother, who, along with her mother, was responsible for giving her some perspective.

It was after she had lost a first-round match in Doha last February that Azarenka was at a crossroads, unsure whether the grind of the tennis tour, with its constant travel, was really what she wanted. It took her family to make her realise she actually had it good.

Azarenka is the fourth consecutive first-time grand slam champion on the women's side, but she said the work really begins now. "I really have to keep going the same way," she said. "It's going to be a long year. It's going to be a lot of matches. I just want to keep improving. I feel like there is no limit, if I can try my best every day, I can improve a little bit, little by little. That's my mentality, how I have been working hard. It's just going to have to stay the same."

For Sharapova, who has reached two of the past three grand slam finals, it was a second defeat, having lost to Petra Kvitova at Wimbledon last summer. The 24-year-old, who came into the event with no match practice after an ankle injury, was gracious in defeat, admitting she had been outplayed, but rueful that she had failed to produce her best.

"As in any sport, you have your good days and your tough days, and days when things don't work out the way you want them," she said. "But Victoria was better on every level today and she was just too good. From my side, I don't know, the switch just went off.

Source: www. guardian.co.uk

Quotes of Quarter

Azarenka said:

"I was super nervous. I couldn't wait to actually go on the court and play. It was a long wait. The first two games were a little bit of a disaster, but then I kind of got the momentum going and I relaxed."

Three Dinamo Minsk Canadians get Belarusian citizenship

MINSK, 17 February (BelTA) – Dinamo Minsk players Geoff Platt, Kevin Lalande and Charles Linglet have received the Belarusian citizenship. The President of Belarus satisfied the appeal of the Canadian ice hockey players and the Ministry of Sports and Tourism and signed a decree on granting Belarusian citizenship on three Dinamo players, head of the department on citizenship and migration of the Interior Ministry Aleksei Begun told BelTA.

Forward Geoff Platt has so far played 166 matches for Dinamo Minsk, scoring 111 points.

24-four-year goaltender Kevin Lalande and 29-year-old forward Charles Linglet joined Dinamo Minsk this season. Kevin Lalande played in 33 matches saving 91.7% of shots. Charles Linglet participated in 47 matches scoring 24 points.

.HC Dinamo Minsk ranks third in Tarasov Division behind Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod and Severstal Cherepovets and holds the fifth spot in the Western Conference. In the KHL overall standings Dinamo Minsk is the tenth among 23 teams: 20 wins in regular time, 6 wins in shootouts, 3 losses in overtime, 3 losses in shootouts and 18 in regular time, scoring 78 points from 50 matches (goal difference 145-133).

Dinamo Minsk qualified for the KHL playoff after their win over Severstal Cherepovets 4-2 on 31 January. Playoff berths have been also sealed by CSA St Petersburg, Dynamo Moscow, Torpedo Nizhny Novgorod, Severstal Cherepovets, Atlant Mytishchi (all from the Western Conference), Tractor Chelyabinsk, Metallurg Magnitogorsk and Ak Bars Kazan (the Eastern Conference)

Source: Belarusian Telegraph Agency BELTA, February17, 2012.

Darya Domracheva Becomes Biathlon World Champion

The Belarusian won the women's pursuit race at the World Cup in Ruhpolding, Germany.Domracheva made the 10-kilometer race for 29 minutes 39,6 seconds. German Magdalena Neuner got the silver medal, having lost 25 seconds to Darya. She also had two misses at the last shooting point. Russia's Olga Vilukhina is in the third place



Source: European Radio for Belarus, March 5, 2012

BELARUSIAN REVIEW (ISSN 1064-7716)

Published by Belarusan-American Association, Inc.
a fraternal non-profit association

Editor: George Stankevich

Deputy Editor: Jan Maksymiuk

Assistant Editor: Hanna Vasilevich

Editor-At-Large: Joe Arciuch

Web site Editor: Kiryl Kaścian

Contributing Editors: Ethan Burger, Hanna Vasilevich, Kiryl Kaścian, David Marples, Joe Price, Jan Zaprudnik, Aliaksiej Dajlidaŭ, Illia Kunitski, Zachar Šybieka, Leonid Smilovitsky, David Erkomaishvili, Aziz Burkhanov

Copy Editors: Maria Kiehn, Natalia Rusak, Steve Stankievich

Production: George Stankevich

Publisher: Vital Alisiyonak

Circulation: Vital Alisiyonak

Treasurer: Serge Tryhubovich

U.S.A. : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
P.O. Box 1347, Highland Park, NJ 08904
E-mail: **belarusianreview@hotmail.com**
OR **vitalonak@yahoo.com**
Tel: (001) 609 424 3126

Europe : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
Malesicka ul. 553/65
108 00 Praha 10, Czech Republic
E-mail: **jurka.stan@gmail.com**
Tel: (420) 274 771 338, (420) 774 613 356

BELARUSIAN REVIEW is registered in Europe with Czech Ministry of Culture
Registration No. MK ČR E 13311

Publication Date: March 2012

Printed by:
in Czech Republic —Tiskárna OFF Studio,
101 00 Praha 10
in the United States —JAMM Printing,
Long Branch, N.J., 07740

Annual subscription rate in 2011:
$45 for individuals, $65 for institutions
payable by check or money order in US funds
to: BELARUSIAN REVIEW or BR
P.O. Box 1347, Highland Park, NJ 08904, USA

ON-LINE: http://www.belarusianreview.org
Archival issues may be also downloaded